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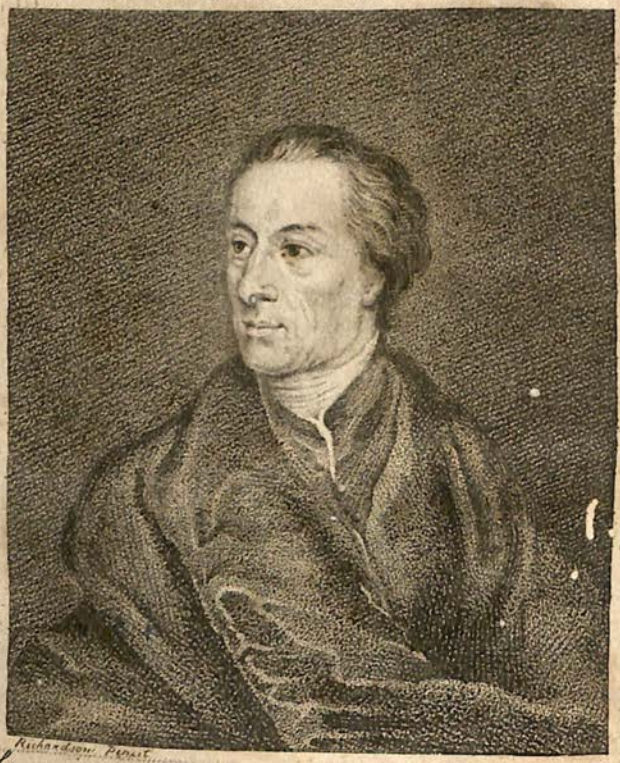

Richardson Pinxt.

My Mother is much better this Summer than she
ought to be not having seen Mrs Knight; and
that. I am sick every other day as usual: &
this day for one: but truly & always.

Your most affectionate
& most humble Servant A. Pope

Published as the Act directs from the Original Jan.y 1806

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

GENIUS AND WRITINGS

OF

POPE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By JOSEPH WARTON, D. D.

66669

VOL. I.

THE FIFTH EDITION, CORRECTED.

To which is now added,

AN INDEX.

B1576

Satyra quidem tota nostra est: in qua primus insignem laudem adeptus est Lucilius; qui quosdam ita deditos sibi adhuc habet amatores, ut eum, non ejusdem modo operis autoribus, sed omnibus poetis, præferre non dubitent.

QUINTILIAN.

LONDON:

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FOR W. J. AND J. RICHARDSON; OTRIDGE AND SON; J. WALKER; CUTHELL AND MARTIN; R. FAULDER; R. LEA; OGILVY AND SON; J. NUNN; E. JEFFERY; LACKINGTON, ALLEN, AND CO. LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME; CADELL AND DAVIES; J. AND A. ARCH; J. ASPERNE; AND VERNOR, HOOD, AND SHARPE.

1806

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TO THE

REV. DR. YOUNG,

RECTOR OF WELWYN,

IN

HERTFORDSHIRE.

DEAR SIR,

PERMIT me to break into your retirement, the reſidence of virtue and literature, and to trouble you with a few reflections on the merits and real character of an admired Author, and on other collateral ſubjects of criticiſm, that will naturally ariſe in the courſe of ſuch an enquiry. No love of ſingularity, no affectation of paradoxical opinions, gave riſe to the following Work. I revere the memory of POPE, I reſpect and honour his abilities; but I do not think him at the head of his profeſſion. In other words, in that ſpecies of poetry wherein

POPE excelled, he is ſuperior to all mankind: and I only ſay, that this ſpecies of poetry is not the moſt excellent one of the art.

We do not, it ſhould ſeem, ſufficiently attend to the difference there is betwixt a MAN OF WIT, a MAN OF SENSE, and a TRUE POET. Donne and Swift were undoubtedly men of wit, and men of ſenſe: but what traces have they left of PURE POETRY? It is remarkable, that Dryden ſays of Donne, "He was the greateſt wit, though not the greateſt poet, of this nation. Fontenelle and La Motte are entitled to the former character; but what can they urge to gain the latter? Which of theſe characters is the moſt valuable and uſeful, is entirely out of the queſtion: all I plead for, is, to have their ſeveral provinces kept diſtinct from each other; and to impreſs on the reader, that a clear head, and acute underſtanding, are not ſufficient, alone, to make a POET; that the moſt ſolid obſervations on human life, expreſſed with the utmoſt elegance and brevity, are MORALITY, and not POETRY; that the EPISTLES of Boileau in RHYME, are no more poetical, than the CHARACTERS of La Bruyere in

in PROSE; and that it is a creative and glowing IMAGINATION, "acer ſpiritus ac vis," and that alone, that can ſtamp a writer with this exalted and very uncommon character, which ſo few poſſeſs, and of which ſo few can properly judge.

For one perſon who can adequately reliſh and enjoy a work of imagination, twenty are to be found who can taſte, and judge of, obſervations on familiar life, and the manners of the age. The Satires of Arioſto are more read than the Orlando Furioſo, or even Dante. Are there ſo many cordial admirers of Spenſer and Milton, as of Hudibras, if we ſtrike out of the number of theſe ſuppoſed admirers, thoſe who appear ſuch out of faſhion, and not of feeling? Swift's Rhapſody on Poetry is far more popular than Akenſide's noble Ode to Lord Huntingdon. The EPISTLES on the Characters of Men and Women, and your ſprightly Satires, my good friend, are more frequently peruſed, and quoted, than L'Allegro and Il Penſeroſo of Milton. Had you written only theſe Satires, you would, indeed, have gained the title of a man of wit, and a

man of ſenſe; but, I am confident, would not inſiſt on being denominated a POET MERELY on their account.

NON SATIS EST PURIS VERSUM PERSCRIBERE VERBIS.

It is amazing this matter ſhould ever have been miſtaken, when Horace has taken particular and repeated pains to ſettle and adjuſt the opinion in queſtion. He has more than once diſclaimed all right and title to the name of POET on the ſcore of his ethic and ſatiric pieces.

——NEQUE ENIM CONCLUDERE VERSUM
DIXERIS ESSE SATIS——

are lines often repeated, but whoſe meaning is not extended and weighed as it ought to be. Nothing can be more judicious than the method he preſcribes, of trying whether any compoſition be eſſentially poetical or not; which is, to drop entirely the meaſures and numbers, and tranſpoſe and invert the order of the words:

words: and in this unadorned manner to peruſe the paſſage. If there be really in it a true poetical ſpirit, all your inverſions and tranſpoſitions will not diſguiſe and extinguiſh it; but it will retain its luſtre, like a diamond unſet, and thrown back into the rubbiſh of the mine. Let us make a little experiment on the following well-known lines: "*Yes, you deſpiſe the man that is confined to books, who rails at humankind from his ſtudy; though what he learns, he ſpeaks; and may, perhaps, advance ſome general maxims, or may be right by chance. The coxcomb bird, ſo grave and ſo talkative, that cries whore, knave, and cuckold, from his cage, though he rightly call many a paſſenger, you hold him no philoſopher. And yet, ſuch is the fate of all extremes, men may be read too much, as well as books. We grow more partial, for the ſake of the obſerver, to obſervations which we ourſelves make; leſs ſo to written wiſdom, becauſe another's. Maxims are drawn from notions, and thoſe from gueſs.*" What ſhall we ſay of this paſſage? Why, that it is moſt excellent ſenſe, but juſt as poetical as the "Qui fit Mæcenas" of the author, who recommends this method of trial. Take ten lines of the Iliad. Paradiſe Loſt, or even of the

the Georgics of Virgil, and ſee whether, by any proceſs of critical chemiſtry, you can lower and reduce them to the tameneſs of proſe. You will find that they will appear like Ulyſſes in his diſguiſe of rags, ſtill a hero, though lodged in the cottage of the herdſman Eumæus.

The ſublime and the pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poeſy. What is there tranſcendently ſublime or pathetic in POPE? In his Works there is, indeed, "nihil inane, nihil arceſſitum; puro tamen fonti quam magno flumini proprior;" as the excellent Quintilian remarks of Lyſias. And becauſe I am, perhaps, unwilling to ſpeak out in plain Engliſh, I will adopt the following paſſage of Voltaire, which, in my opinion, as exactly characterizes POPE as it does his model Boileau, for whom it was originally deſigned: "INCAPABLE PEUT-ETRE DU SUBLIME QUI ELEVE L'AME, ET DU SENTIMENT QUI L'ATTENDRIT, MAIS FAIT POUR ECLAIRER CEUX A QUI LA NATURE ACCORDA L'UN ET L'AUTRE, LABORIEUX, SEVERE, PRECIS, PUR,

HARMONIEUX, IL DEVINT, ENFIN, LE POETE DE LA RAISON."

Our Engliſh Poets may, I think, be diſpoſed in four different claſſes and degrees. In the firſt claſs I would place our only three ſublime and pathetic poets; SPENSER, SHAKESPEARE, MILTON. In the ſecond claſs ſhould be ranked ſuch as poſſeſſed the true poetical genius, in a more moderate degree, but who had noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyrical poeſy. At the head of theſe are DRYDEN, PRIOR, ADDISON, COWLEY, WALLER, GARTH, FENTON, GAY, DENHAM, PARNELL. In the third claſs may be placed men of wit, of elegant taſte, and lively fancy in deſcribing familiar life, though not the higher ſcenes of poetry. Here may be numbered, BUTLER, SWIFT, ROCHESTER, DONNE, DORSET, OLDHAM. In the fourth claſs, the mere verſifiers, however ſmooth and melliflu-ous ſome of them may be thought, ſhould be diſpoſed. Such as PITT, SANDYS, FAIRFAX, BROOME, BUCKINGHAM, LANSDOWN. This enumeration is not intended as a complete catalogue of writers, and in their proper order, but

but only to mark out briefly the different ſpecies of our celebrated authors. In which of theſe claſſes POPE deſerves to be placed, the following Work is intended to determine.

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate

1756.

And faithful Servant.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

GENIUS AND WRITINGS

OF

POPE.

SECTION I.

OF THE PASTORALS, AND THE MESSIAH, AN ECLOGUE.

PRINCES and Authors are seldom spoken of, during their lives, with justice and impartiality. Admiration and Envy, their constant attendants, like two unskilful artists, are apt to overcharge their pieces with too great a quantity of light or of shade; and are disqualified happily to hit upon that middle colour, that mixture of error and

excellence, which alone renders every representation of man just and natural. This, perhaps, may be one reason, among others, why we have never yet seen a fair and candid criticism on the character and merits of our last great poet, Mr. POPE. I have therefore thought, that it would be no unpleasing amusement, or uninstructive employment, to examine at large, without blind panegyric, or petulant invective, the writings of this English Classic, in the order in which they are arranged in the nine volumes of the elegant edition of Dr. Warburton. As I shall neither censure nor commend, without alleging the reason on which my opinion is founded, I shall be entirely unmoved at the imputation of malignity, or the clamours of popular prejudice.

It is somewhat strange, that in the pastorals of a young poet, there should not be found a single rural image that is new: but this, I am afraid, is the case in the PASTORALS before us. The ideas of Theocritus, Virgil, and Spenser, are, indeed, here exhibited in language equally mellifluous and pure; but the descriptions and sentiments are trite and common.

That

That the design of pastoral poesy is, to represent the undisturbed felicity of the golden age, is an empty notion, which, though supported by a Rapin and a Fontenelle,* I think, all rational critics have agreed to extirpate and explode. But I do not remember, that even these, or any critics, have remarked the circumstance that gave origin to the opinion, that any golden age was intended. Theocritus, the father and the model of this enchanting species of composition, lived and wrote in Sicily. The climate of Sicily was delicious, and the face of the country various and beautiful: its vallies and its precipices, its grottos and cascades, were SWEETLY INTERCHANGED, and its flowers and fruits were lavish and luscious. The poet described what he saw and felt; and had no need to have recourse to those artificial assemblages of pleasing objects, which are not to

* In the dissertation annexed to his Pastorals, in which he made his first attempt to depreciate the ancients. Among his papers, after his death, was found a discourse on the Greek Tragedians; which *Trublet*, his relation, gave to *Diderot*; that he might insert it in the *Encyclopedie;* which, however, *Diderot* refused to do, because, he said, he could not possibly insert in that work, a treatise that tended to prove, that *Eschylus* was a madman.

be found in nature. The figs and the honey, which he assigns* as a reward to a victorious shepherd, were in themselves exquisite, and are therefore assigned with great propriety: and the beauties of that luxurious landscape, so richly and circumstantially delineated in the close of the seventh idyllium, where all things smelt of summer, and smelt of autumn,

Παντ' ὠσδεν θερεος μαλα πιονος, ὠσδε δ' ὀπωρης,†

were present and real. Succeeding writers, supposing these beauties too great and abundant to be real, referred them to the fictitious and imaginary scenes of a golden age.

A mixture of British and Grecian ideas may justly be deemed a blemish in the PASTORALS of POPE: and propriety is certainly violated, when he couples Pactolus with Thames, and Windsor with Hybla. Complaints of immoderate heat, and wishes to be conveyed to cooling caverns, when uttered by the inhabitants of Greece, have a decorum and consistency, which they totally lose

* Idyll. i. ver. 146. † Ver. 133.

lose in the character of a British shepherd: and Theocritus, during the ardors of Sirius, must have heard the murmurings of a brook, and the whispers of a pine,* with more home-felt pleasure, than POPE † could possibly experience upon the same occasion. We can never completely relish, or adequately understand, any author, especially any Ancient, except we constantly keep in our eye, his climate, his country, and his age. POPE himself informs us, in a note, that he judiciously omitted the following verse,

And list'ning wolves grow milder as they hear,‡

on account of the absurdity, which Spenser overlooked, of introducing wolves into England. But on this principle, which is certainly a just one, may it not be asked, why he should speak, the scene lying in Windsor-Forest, of the SULTRY SIRIUS,§ of the GRATEFUL CLUSTERS *of grapes*,‖ of a *pipe of reeds*,¶ the antique fistula, of *thanking Ceres for a plentiful harvest*,** of *the sacrifice*

* Idyll. i. ver. 1. † Past. iv. ver. 1. ‡ Past. ii. § Past. ii. ver. 21. ‖ Past. iii. ver. 74. ¶ Past. ii. ver. 41. ** Ibid. ver. 66.

*of lambs,** with many other instances that might be adduced to this purpose. That POPE, however, was sensible of the importance of adapting images to the scene of action, is obvious from the following example of his judgment; for, in translating,

Audiit EUROTAS, jussitque ediscere LAUROS,

he has dexterously dropt the *laurels* appropriated to Eurotas, as he is speaking of the river Thames, and has rendered it,

Thames heard the numbers, as he flow'd along,
And bade his *willows* learn the moving song.†

In the passages which Pope has imitated from Theocritus, and from his Latin translator, Virgil, he has merited but little applause. It may not be unentertaining to see, how coldly and unpoetically POPE has copied the subsequent appeal to the nymphs on the death of Daphnis, in comparison of Milton on LYCIDAS, one of his juvenile, but one of his most exquisite pieces.

* Past. iv. ver. 81. † Ibid. ver. 14.

Πα ποκ' αρ' ησθ' οκα Δαφνις ετακειο; ωα ωοκα, Νυμφαι;
Η καλα Πηνειω καλα τεμπεα, η κατα Πινδω;
Ου γαρ δη ωολαμοιο μεσαν ροον ειχεθ' Αναπω,
Ουδ' Αιλικας σκοπιαν, ουδ' Ακιδος ιερον υδωρ.*

Where stray ye, Muses, in what lawn or grove,
While your Alexis pines in hopeless love?
In those fair fields where sacred Isis glides,
Or else where Cam his winding vales divides.†

Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie;
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.‡

The mention of places remarkably romantic, the supposed habitation of Druids, bards, and wizards, is far more pleasing to the imagination, than the obvious introduction of Cam and Isis, as seats of the Muses.

A shepherd in Theocritus wishes, with much tenderness and elegance, both which must suffer in a literal translation, "Would I could become a murmuring bee, fly into your grotto, and be

 permitted

* Theocritus, Idyll. i. 66. † Pope, Past. ii. 23.

‡ Milton.

permitted to creep among the leaves of ivy and fern that compose the chaplet which adorns your head."* POPE has thus altered this image:

> Oh! were I made, by some transforming pow'r,
> The captive bird that sings within thy bow'r!
> Then might my voice thy list'ning ears employ;
> And I those kisses he receives enjoy.†

On three accounts the former image is preferable to the latter: for the pastoral wildness, the delicacy, and the uncommonness of the thought. I cannot forbear adding, that the riddle of the *Royal Oak*, in the first Pastoral, invented in imitation of the Virgilian enigmas in the third eclogue, savours of pun, and puerile conceit.

> Say, Daphnis, say, in what glad soil appears
> A wond'rous tree, that sacred monarchs bears?

With what propriety could the tree, whose shade protected the king, be said to be prolific of princes?

That

* —— —— —— —— Αιθε γενοιμαν
Α βομβευσα μελισσα, και ες τεον ανδρον ικοιμαν,
Τον κισσον διαδυς, και ται πτερυγ' ά τυ πυκασδη.
Idyll. iii. 12.

† Past. ii. 45.

That POPE has not equalled Theocritus, will, indeed, appear less surprising, if we reflect, that no original writer ever remained so unrivalled by succeeding copyists as this Sicilian master.

If it should be objected, that the barrenness of invention, imputed to POPE from a view of his PASTORALS, is equally imputable to the Bucolics of Virgil, it may be answered, that, whatever may be determined of the rest, yet the first and last Eclogues of Virgil, are indisputable proofs of true genius, and power of fancy. The influence of war on the tranquillity of rural life, rendered the subject of the first new and interesting: its composition is truly dramatic; and the characters of its two shepherds are well supported, and happily contrasted: and the last has expressively painted the changeful resolutions, the wild wishes, the passionate and abrupt exclamations, of a disappointed and despairing lover.

Upon the whole, the principal merit of the PASTORALS of POPE, consists in their correct and musical versification; musical, to a degree of which rhyme could hardly be thought capable;

ble; and in giving the first specimen of that harmony in English verse, which is now become indispensably necessary, and which has so forcibly and universally influenced the public ear, as to have rendered every moderate rhymer melodious. POPE lengthened the abruptness of Waller, and at the same time contracted the exuberance of Dryden.

I remember to have been informed, by an intimate friend of POPE, that he had once laid a design of writing AMERICAN ECLOGUES. The subject would have been fruitful of the most poetical imagery; and, if properly executed, would have rescued the author from the accusation here urged, of having written Eclogues without invention.

Our author, who had received an early tincture of religion, a reverence for which he preserved to the last, was, with justice, convinced, that the Scriptures of God contained not only the purest precepts of morality, but the most elevated and sublime strokes of genuine poesy; strokes as much superior to any thing Heathenism

can produce, as is Jehovah to Jupiter. This is the case more particularly in the exalted prophecy of Isaiah, which POPE has so successfully versified in an Eclogue, that incontestably surpasses the Pollio of Virgil: although, perhaps, the dignity, the energy, and the simplicity, of the original, are in a few passages weakened and diminished by florid epithets, and useless circumlocutions.

> See, Nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,
> With all the incense of the breathing spring,*

are lines which have too much prettiness, and too modern an air. The judicious addition of circumstances and adjuncts, is what renders poesy a more lively imitation of nature than prose. POPE has been happy in introducing the following circumstance: the prophet says, "The parched ground shall become a pool:" Our author expresses this idea by saying, that the shepherd

> —*shall* START amid the thirsty wild to hear
> New falls of water murmuring in his ear.†

A striking

* MESS. v. 23. † v. 69.

A striking example of a similar beauty may be added from Thomson. Melisander, in the Tragedy of AGAMEMNON, after telling us he was conveyed in a vessel, at midnight, to the wildest of the Cyclades, adds, when the pitiless mariners had left him in that dreadful solitude,

> — — — — — I never heard
> A sound so dismal as their parting oars!

On the other hand, the prophet has been sometimes particular, when POPE has been only general. "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee:——The multitude of CAMELS shall cover thee: the DROMEDARIES of Midian and Ephah: all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. All the FLOCKS of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee; the RAMS of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee."* In imitating this passage, POPE has omitted the different beasts that in so picturesque a manner characterize the different countries which were to be gathered together

* Isaiah, c. lx. v. 4, 6, 7.

gether on this important event, and says only, in undistinguishing terms,

> See, barbarous nations at thy gates attend,
> Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend:
> See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings,
> And heap'd with products of Sabæan springs.*

As prosperity and happiness are described in this Eclogue by a combination of the most pleasing and agreeable objects, so misery and destruction are as forcibly delineated in the same Isaiah, by the circumstances of distress and desolation, that were to attend the fall of that magnificent city, Babylon: and the latter is, perhaps, a more proper and interesting subject for poetry than the former; as such kinds of objects make the deepest impression on the mind; terror being a stronger sensation than joy. Accordingly, a noble ode on the destruction of Babylon, taken from the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, has been written by Dr. Lowth; whose Latin prelections on the inimitable poesy of the Hebrews, abounding in remarks

* Ver. 91.

marks entirely new, delivered in the purest and most expressive language, are the richest augmentation literature has lately received; and from which the following passage, gradually unfolding the singular beauties of this prophecy, is here closely, though faintly, translated, and inserted as a pattern of just criticism.

The prophet having predicted the deliverance of the Jews, and their return into their own country from their rigorous Babylonish captivity, instantly introduces them singing a triumphal song on the fall of the king of Babylon; a song abounding in the most splendid images, and carried on by perpetual, and those very beautiful, personifications. The song begins with a sudden exclamation of the Jews, expressing their joy and wonder at the unexpected change of their condition, and death of the tyrant. Earth with her inhabitants triumphs; the firs and cedars of Libanus, under which images the allegoric style frequently shadows the kings and princes of the Gentiles, rejoice, and insult with reproaches, the broken power of their most implacable foe.

She is at rest, the whole earth is quiet: they break forth into singing.
Even the firs rejoice at thee, the cedars of Libanus:
Since thou art laid low, no feller is come up against us.

There follows a most daring prosopopeia of ORCUS, or the infernal regions: he rouses his inhabitants, the manes of princes, and the shades of departed kings: immediately all of them arise from their thrones, and walk forward to meet the king of Babylon: they insult and deride him, and gather consolation from his calamity.

Art thou also made weak as we? art thou made like unto us?
Is thy pride dashed down to Orcus, the noise of thy harps?
The worm is strewn under thee, the earth-worm is thy covering!

The Jews are again represented speaking: they most strongly exaggerate his remarkable fall, by an exclamation formed in the manner of funeral lamentations:

How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
Thou art dashed down to the earth, thou that didst crush the nations!

They

They next represent the king himself speaking, and madly boasting of his unbounded power whence the prodigiousness of his ruin is wonderfully aggravated. Nor is this enough; a new character is immediately formed: Those are introduced who found the body of the king of Babylon cast out; they survey it closely and attentively, and at last hardly know it.

> Is this the man who made earth tremble, who shook the kingdoms?
> Who made the world a solitude, and destroyed its cities?

They reproach him with the loss of the common rite of sepulture, which was deservedly denied to him for his cruelty and oppression; and curse his name, his race, and posterity. The scene is closed by a most awful speech of God himself, menacing a perpetual extirpation to the king of Babylon, to his descendants, and to his city; and confirming the immutability of his counsels, by the ratification of a solemn oath.

What images, how various, how thick-sown, how sublime, exalted with what energy, what expressions, figures, and sentiments, are here accumulated

accumulated together! We hear the Jews, the cedars of Libanus, the shades of the departed kings, the kings of Babylon, those who find his body, and lastly, Jehovah himself, all speaking in order; and behold them acting their several parts, as it were, in a drama. One continued action is carried on; or rather a various and manifold series of different actions is connected; an excellence more peculiarly appropriated to the sublimer ode, and consummately displayed in this poem of Isaiah, which is the most perfect and unexampled model among all the monuments of antiquity. The personifications are frequent, but not confused; are bold, but not affected: a free, lofty and truly divine spirit predominates through the whole. Nor is any thing wanting to crown and complete the sublimity of this ode with absolute beauty; nor can the Greek or Roman poesy produce any thing that is similar, or second, to this ode."*

It cannot be thought strange, that he who could so judiciously explain, could as poetically

 express,

* Prælect. xiii. pag. 121.

express, the ideas of Isaiah: the latter he has performed in many instances; but in none more strikingly than in the following, which magnificently represents the Messiah treading the wine-press in his anger; and which an impartial judge, not blinded by the charms of antiquity, will think equal to many descriptions in Virgil, in point of elegance and energy:

—— Ille patris vires indutus et iram
Dira rubens graditur, per stragem et fracta potentum
Agmina, prona solo; prostratisque hostibus ultor
Insultat; ceu præla novo spumantia musto
Exercens, salit attritas calcator in uvas,
Congestamque struem subigit: cæde atra recenti
Crura madent, rorantque inspersæ sanguine vestes.*

SECTION

* Prælect. vii. pag. 62.

SECTION II.

OF WINDSOR-FOREST, AND LYRIC PIECES.

DESCRIPTIVE Poetry was by no means the shining talent of POPE. This assertion may be manifested by the few images introduced in the poem before us, which are not equally applicable to any place whatsoever. Rural beauty in general, and not the peculiar beauties of the Forest of Windsor, are here described. Nor are the sports of setting, shooting, and fishing, included between the ninety-third and one hundred and forty-sixth verses, to which the reader is referred, at all more appropriated. The stag-chase, that immediately follows, although some of the lines are incomparably good,* is not so full, so animated, and so circumstantiated, as that of Somerville.

* See particularly, ver. 151.

The digression that describes the demolition of the thirty villages by William the Conqueror, is well imagined; particularly,

Round broken columns clasping ivy twin'd;
O'er heaps of ruin stalk'd the stately hind;
The fox obscene to gaping tombs retires,
And savage howlings fill the sacred quires.*

Though I cannot forbear thinking, that the following picture of the ruins of Godstow Nunnery, drawn, it should seem, on the spot, and worthy the hand of Paul Brill, is by no means excelled by the foregoing.

Qua nudo Rosamonda humilis sub culmine tecti
Marginis obscuri servat inane decus,
Rara intermissæ circum vestigia molis,
Et sola in vacuo tramite porta labat:
Sacræ olim sedes riguæ convallis in umbra,
Et veteri pavidum religione nemus.
Pallentes nocturna ciens campana sorores
Hinc matutinum sæpe monebat avem;
Hinc procul in media tardæ caliginis hora
Prodidit arcanas arcta fenestra faces:
Nunc muscosa extant sparsim de cespite saxa,
Nunc muro avellunt germen agreste boves.†

VOLTAIRE,

* Ver. 69. † Carmina Quadrages. Oxon. 1748. pag. 3.

VOLTAIRE, in the first volume of his entertaining and lively Essay on General History, is inclined to dispute the truth of this devastation imputed to William the Conqueror, but for a reason not very solid and conclusive. His objection consists in the improbability that any man in his senses, should think of depopulating a circuit of fifteen leagues, and of sowing and planting a forest therein, when he was now sixty-three years old, and could not reasonably hope to live long enough to have the pleasure of hunting in it after these trees were grown up. As if it were necessary to have only woods to hunt in, or that a forest should be laid out (as are some in France) in regular alleys and avenues of trees. All our old historians, Florence of Worcester, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, Simeon of Durham, Hoveden, Brompton, and Walter Mapes, join in charging William with this wanton act of cruelty and oppression. And yet those who have most accurately examined the New Forest, can discover no mark or footstep of any other place of habitation, parish, or church, or castle, than what at present remains. There is, indeed, some probability that the character of this Prince has

been misrepresented, and his oppressions magnified. The law of the curfeu-bell, by which every inhabitant of England was obliged to extinguish his fire and candles at eight in the evening, has been usually alleged as the institution of a capricious tyrant. But this law, as Voltaire* rightly observes, was so far from being absurdly tyrannical, that it was an ancient custom established among all the monasteries of the north. Their houses were built of wood; and so cautious a method to prevent fire, was an object worthy a prudent legislator. A more amiable idea than POPE has here exhibited of the Conqueror, is given us of the same Prince, by that diligent enquirer into antiquity, the President Henault, in a passage that contains some curious particulars, characteristical of the manners of that age. "This Monarch protected letters, at a time when books were so rare and uncommon, that a Countess of Anjou gave for a collection of homilies, two hundred sheep, a measure of wheat, another of rye, a third of millet, and a certain number of the skins of martens."

* Abregé de l'Histoire Universelle, &c. tom. i. pag. 280.

martens."* But to return. The story of † Lodona is prettily Ovidian; but there is scarcely a single incident in it, but what is borrowed from some transformation of Ovid. The picture of a virtuous and learned man in retirement ‡ is highly finished, as the poet was here in his proper element, recommending integrity and science. He has no where discovered more poetic enthusiasm, than where, speaking of the poets who lived or died near this spot, he breaks out,

I seem through consecrated walks to rove,
I hear soft music die along the grove;
Led by the sound, I roam from shade to shade,
By godlike poets venerable made.||

The enumeration of the princes who were either born or interred at Windsor is judiciously introduced. Yet I have frequently wondered that

* Novel Abregé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France. tom. i. page 126. To this useful and entertaining work Voltaire has often been deeply indebted, without confessing his obligation. The last edition 4to. of this work was improved with many important circumstances. Paris, 1752. Dedicated to the Queen of France.

† Ver. 171. ‡ Ver. 233. || Ver. 267.

he should have omitted the opportunity of describing at length its venerable ancient castle, and the fruitful and extensive prospects * which it commands. He slides with dexterity and address from speaking of the miseries of the civil war to the blessings of peace.† OLD FATHER THAMES is raised, and acts, and speaks, with becoming dignity. And though the trite and obvious insignia of a river god are attributed, yet there is one circumstance in his appearance highly picturesque,

> His sea-green mantle waving with the wind.‡

The relievo upon his urn is also finely imagined:

> The figur'd streams in waves of silver roll'd,
> And on their banks Augusta rose in gold.‖

He

* The great improvements lately made near Windsor-Lodge, by the Duke of Cumberland, particularly the magnificent lake and cascade, highly deserve to be celebrated by some future POPE; and would have contributed not a little to the beauty of the poem now before us.

† Ver. 324. ‡ Ver. 350. ‖ Ver. 335.

He has with exquisite skill selected only those rivers as attendants of Thames, who are his subjects, his tributaries, or neighbours. I cannot resist the pleasure of transcribing the passage:

> First the fam'd authors of his ancient name,
> The winding Isis, and the fruitful Tame:
> The Kennet swift, for silver eels renown'd;
> The Loddon slow, with verdant osiers crown'd;
> Cole, whose dark streams his flowery islands lave;
> And chalky Wey, that rolls a milky wave:
> The blue transparent Vandalis appears;
> The gulphy Lee his sedgy tresses rears;
> The sullen Mole, that hides his diving flood;
> And silent Darent, stain'd with British blood.*

As I before produced a passage of Milton which I thought superior to a similar one of POPE, I shall, in order to preserve impartiality, produce another from Milton, in which I think him inferior to the last quoted passage; except, perhaps, in the third line; first remarking, that both authors are much indebted to Spenser,† and perhaps to Drayton.

> Rivers, arise! whether thou be the son
> Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulphy Dun;

Or

* Ver. 339. † Fairy Queen, B. iv. C. 11.

Or Trent, who, like some earth-born giant, spreads
His thirty arms along th' indented meads;
Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath;
Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden's death;
Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lee,
Or coaly Tine, or ancient hallow'd Dee;
Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian's name;
Or Medway smooth, or royal-tower'd Thame.*

The poets, both ancient and modern, are obliged to the rivers for some of their most striking descriptions. The Tiber and the Nile of Virgil, the Aufidus of Horace, the Sabrina of Milton, and the Scamander of Homer, are among their capital figures.

The influences and effects of peace, and its consequence, a diffusive commerce, are expressed by selecting such circumstances as are best adapted to strike the imagination by lively pictures; the selection of which chiefly constitutes true poetry. An historian, or prose-writer, might say, "Then shall the most distant nations croud into my port:" a poet sets before

* At a vacation exercise, &c. Ver. 91. Milton was now aged but nineteen.

before your eyes "the ships of uncouth form," that shall arrive in the Thames.*

> And *feather'd* people croud my wealthy side;
> And *naked* youths, and *painted* chiefs, admire
> Our speech, our colour, and our strange *attire*.

And the benevolence and poetry of the succeeding wish are worthy admiration.

> Till the freed Indians, in their native groves,
> Reap their own fruits, and woo their sable loves;
> Peru once more a race of kings behold,
> And other Mexicos be roof'd with gold.†

The two epithets, *native* and *sable*, have peculiar elegance and force; and as Peru was particularly famous for its long succession of Incas, and Mexico for many magnificent works of massy gold, there is great propriety in fixing the restoration of the grandeur of each to that object for which each was once so remarkable.

The group of allegorical personages that succeeds the last mentioned lines, are worthy the

* Ver. 400. et seq. † Ver. 409.

the pencil of Rubens or Julio Romano: it may, perhaps, however, be wished that the epithets *barbarous*, (discord,) *mad*, (ambition,) *hateful*, (envy,)* had been particular and picturesque, instead of general and indiscriminating; though it may possibly be urged, that, in describing the dreadful inhabitants of the portal of hell, Virgil has not always used such adjuncts and epithets as a painter or statuary might work after; he says only *ultrices* CURÆ, *mortiferum* BELLUM, *mala* MENTIS GAUDIA; particularly, *malesuada* is only applied to FAMES, instead of a word that might represent the meagre and ghastly figure intended. I make no scruple of adding, that in this famous passage, Virgil has exhibited no images so lively and distinct, as these living figures painted by POPE, each of them with their proper insignia and attributes:

——ENVY her own snakes shall feel,
And PERSECUTION mourn his broken wheel:
There FACTION roar, REBELLION bite her chain,
And gasping FURIES thirst for blood in vain †

A person

* Ver. 411. et seq. † Ver. 419. et seq.

A person of no small rank has informed me, that Mr. Addison was inexpressibly chagrined at this noble conclusion of WINDSOR-FOREST, both as a politician and as a poet. As a politician, because it so highly celebrated that treaty of peace which he deemed so pernicious to the liberties of Europe; and as a poet, because he was deeply conscious that his own CAMPAIGN, that gazette in rhyme, contained no strokes of such genuine and sublime poetry as the conclusion before us.

It is one of the greatest and most pleasing arts of descriptive poetry, to introduce moral sentences and instructions in an oblique and indirect manner, in places where one naturally expects only painting and amusement. We have virtue, as POPE remarks,* put upon us by surprize, and are pleased to find a thing where we should never have looked to meet with it. I must do a pleasing English poet the justice to observe, that it is this particular art that

* Iliad. B. 16. in the notes: Ver. 465.

that is the very distinguishing excellence of COOPER'S-HILL; throughout which, the descriptions of places, and images raised by the poet, are still tending to some hint, or leading into some reflection, upon moral life, or political institution; much in the same manner as the real sight of such scenes and prospects is apt to give the mind a composed turn, and incline it to thoughts and contemplations that have a relation to the object. This is the great charm of the incomparable ELEGY written in a Country Church-Yard. Having mentioned the rustic monuments and simple epitaphs of the swains, the amiable poet falls into a very natural reflection:

> For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
> This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
> Left the warm precincts of the chearful day,
> Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

Of this art POPE has exhibited some specimens in the poem we are examining, but not so many as might be expected from a mind so strongly inclined to a moral way of writ-

ing. After speaking of hunting the hare, he immediately subjoins, much in the spirit of Denham,

> Beasts urg'd by us their fellow-beasts pursue,
> And learn of man each other to undo.*

Where he is describing the tyrannies formerly exercised in this kingdom,

> Cities laid waste, they storm'd the dens and caves,

He instantly adds, with an indignation becoming a true lover of liberty,

> For wiser brutes were backward to be slaves.†

But I am afraid our author, in the following passage, has fallen into a fault rather uncommon in his writings, a reflection that is very far-fetched and forced;

> Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
> And part admit, and part exclude the day;

As

* Ver. 123. But a critic of taste objected to me the use of the word *undo;* and of the word *backward* in a subsequent line.

† Ver. 50.

As some coy nymph her lover's warm address
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress.*

Bohours would rank this comparison among false thoughts and Italian conceits; such particularly as abound in the works of Marino. The fallacy consists in giving design and artifice to the wood, as well as to the coquette; and in putting the light of the sun and the warmth of a lover on a level.

A pathetic reflection, properly introduced into a descriptive poem, will have greater force and beauty, and more deeply interest a reader, than a moral one. When POPE, therefore, has described a pheasant shot, he breaks out into a very masterly exclamation;

Ah! what avail his glossy varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?†

This exquisite picture heightens the distress, and powerfully excites the commiseration of the

* Ver. 17. † Ver. 115.

the reader. Under this head, it would be unpardonable to omit a capital, and, I think, one of the most excellent examples extant, of the beauty here intended, in the third Georgic of Virgil.* The poet having mournfully described a steer struck with a pestilence, and falling down dead in the middle of his work, artfully reminds us of his former services;

> Quid labor aut benefacta juvant? Quid vomere terras
> Invertisse graves?†

This circumstance would have been sufficient, as it raised our pity from a motive of gratitude; but with this circumstance the tender Virgil was not content; what he adds, therefore, of the natural undeviating temperance of the animal, who cannot have contracted disease by excess, and who for that reason deserved a better fate, is moving beyond compare:

> ——Atqui non Massica Bacchi
> Munera, non illis epulæ nocuere repostæ!
> Frondibus, et victu pascuntur simplicis herbæ;

* Ver. 525.

† By the epithet GRAVES, Virgil insinuates, after his manner, the difficulty and laboriousness of the work.

Pocula sunt fontes liquidi, atque exercita cursu
Flumina, nec somnos abrumpit cura salubres.

Of English poets, perhaps, none have excelled the ingenious Mr. Dyer in this oblique instruction, into which he frequently steals imperceptibly, in his little descriptive poem entitled GRONGAR HILL, where he disposes every object so as it may give occasion for some observation on human life. Denham himself is not superior to Mr. Dyer in this particular. After painting a landscape very extensive and diversified, he adds,

Thus is Nature's vesture wrought,
To instruct our wandering thought;
Thus she dresses green and gay,
To disperse our cares away.

Another view from this favourite spot, gives him an opportunity for sliding into the following moralities:

* How close and small the hedges lie!
What streaks of meadows cross the eye!
A step,

* In this light also his poem on the Ruins of Rome deserves a perusal. Dodsley's Miscell. vol. i. page 78. His *Fleece*, which

A step, methinks, may pass the stream,
So little distant dangers seem;
So we mistake the Future's face,
Ey'd through Hope's deluding glass.
As yon summits, soft and fair,
Clad in colours of the air,
Which to those, who journey near,
Barren, and brown, and rough appear,
Still we tread the same coarse way,
The Present's still a cloudy day.

The unexpected insertion of such reflections, imparts to us the same pleasure that we feel, when, in wandering through a wilderness or grove, we suddenly behold, in the turning of the walk, a statue of some VIRTUE or MUSE.

It may be observed in general, that description of the external beauties of nature, is usually the first effort of a young genius, before he hath studied manners and passions. Some of Milton's most early, as well as most exquisite pieces, are his Lycidas, L'Allegro, and Il Penseroso; if we may except his Ode on the Nativity of Christ, which is, indeed, prior in the order of time, and

which I had the pleasure of reading in manuscript, with Dr. Akenside, is written in a pure and classical taste, and with many happy imitations of Virgil.

in which a penetrating critic might have discovered the seeds of that boundless imagination, which afterwards was to produce the Paradise Lost. This ode, which, by the way, is not sufficiently read nor admired, is also of the descriptive kind; but the objects of its description are great, and striking to the imagination; the false deities of the Heathen forsaking their temples on the birth of our Saviour; divination and oracles at an end; which facts, though, perhaps, not historically true, are poetically beautiful.

> The lonely mountains o'er,
> And the resounding shore,
> A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament!
> From haunted spring, and dale
> Edg'd with poplar pale,
> The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
> With flower-enwoven tresses torn,
> The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.*

The lovers of poetry (and to such only I write) will not be displeased at my presenting them also with the following image, which is so strongly

* On the morning of Christ's Nativity. Newton's edition, octavo. Vol. ii. page 28, 29, of the Miscellaneous Poems.

strongly conceived, that, methinks, I see at this instant the dæmon it represents:

> And sullen Moloch fled,
> Hath left in shadows dread,
> His burning idol all of blackest hue;
> In vain with cimbals' ring
> They call the griesly king,
> In dismal dance about the furnace blue.

Attention is irresistibly awakened and engaged by that air of solemnity and enthusiasm that reigns in the following stanzas:

> The oracles are dumb;†
> No voice, or hideous hum,
> Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving;
> No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
> Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetic cell.

Such is the power of true poetry, that one is almost inclined to believe the superstitions here alluded to, to be real; and the succeeding circumstances make one start, and look around:

* See also verses written at a Solemn Music, and on the Passion, in the same volume; and a vacation exercise, page 9, in all which are to be found many strokes of the sublime.

† Page 28.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The lars and lemurs moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the flamens at their service quaint!

Methinks we behold the priests interrupted in the middle of the secret ceremonies they were performing, "in their temples dim," gazing with ghastly eyes on each other, and terrified, and wondering from whence these aërial voices should proceed! I have dwelt chiefly on this ode as much less celebrated than L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, which are now universally known; but which, by a strange fatality, lay in a sort of obscurity, the private enjoyment of a few curious readers, till they were set to admirable music by Mr. Handel. And, indeed, this volume of Milton's Miscellaneous Poems has not till very lately met with suitable regard. Shall I offend any rational admirer of POPE, by remarking, that these juvenile descriptive poems of Milton, as well as his Latin Elegies, are of a strain far more exalted than any the former author can boast? Let me add, at the same time, what justice obliges me to add, that they

are far more incorrect. For in the very ode before us, occur one or two passages, that are puerile and affected to a degree not to be paralleled in the purer, but less elevated, compositions of POPE. The season being winter when Jesus was born, Milton says,

> Nature, in awe to HIM,*
> Had dofft her gawdy trim.

And afterwards observes, in a very epigrammatic and forced thought, unsuitable to the dignity of the subject, and of the rest of the ode, that, "she wooed the air, to hide her guilty front with innocent snow,"

> And on her naked shame,†
> Pollute with sinful blame,
> The saintly veil of maiden white to throw,
> Confounded that her Maker's eyes
> Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

* This conceit, with the rest, however, is more excusable, if we recollect how great a reader, especially at this time, Milton was of the Italian Poets. It is certain that Milton, in the beginning of the ode, had the third sonnet of Petrarch strong in his fancy.

> Era 'l giorno, ch' al sol si scoloraro
> Per la pietà del suo fattore i rai;
> Quand', &c.

† Milton's Miscellaneous Poems, vol. ii. page 19.

" It is enough," in the words of Voltaire, " to think one perceives some errors in this great genius; and it is a sort of consolation to a mind so bounded and limited as mine, to be persuaded, that the greatest men are sometimes deceived like the vulgar."

It would be unpardonable to conclude these remarks on descriptive poesy, without taking notice of the SEASONS of Thomson, who had peculiar and powerful talents for this species of composition. Let the reader, therefore, pardon a digression, if such it be, on his merits and character.

Thomson was blessed with a strong and copious fancy; he hath enriched poetry with a variety of new and original images, which he painted from nature itself, and from his own actual observations: his descriptions have, therefore, a distinctness and truth, which are utterly wanting to those of poets who have only copied from each other, and have never looked abroad on the objects themselves. Thomson was accustomed to wander away into the

the country for days, and for weeks, attentive to "each rural sight, each rural sound;" while many a poet, who has dwelt for years in the Strand, has attempted to describe fields and rivers, and generally succeeded accordingly. Hence that nauseous repetition of the same circumstances; hence that disgusting impropriety of introducing what may be called a set of hereditary images, without proper regard to the age, or climate, or occasion, in which they were formerly used. Though the diction of the SEASONS is sometimes harsh and inharmonious, and sometimes turgid and obscure, and though, in many instances, the numbers are not sufficiently diversified by different pauses, yet is this poem, on the whole, from the numberless strokes of nature in which it abounds, one of the most captivating and amusing in our language; and which, as its beauties are not of a transitory kind, as depending on particular customs and manners, will ever be perused with delight. The scenes of Thomson are frequently as wild and romantic as those of Salvator Rosa, varied with precipices and torrents, and "castled cliffs," and deep vallies, with

piny

piny mountains, and the gloomiest caverns. Innumerable are the little circumstances in his descriptions, totally unobserved by all his predecessors. What poet hath ever taken notice of the leaf, that, towards the end of autumn,

> Incessant rustles from the mournful grove,*
> Oft startling such as, studious, walk below,
> And slowly circles through the waving air?

Or who, in speaking of a summer evening, hath ever mentioned

> The quail that clamours for his running mate?

Or the following natural image at the same time of the year?

> Wide o'er the thistly lawn, as swells the breeze,
> A whitening shower of vegetable down
> Amusive floats.† — — —

In what other poet do we find the silence and expectation that precedes an April shower insisted on, as in ver. 165 of SPRING? Or where,

The

* Ver. 1004. † Ver. 1657.

The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard,
By such as wander through the forest walks,
Beneath th' umbrageous multitude of leaves.*

How full, particular, and picturesque, is this assemblage of circumstances that attend a very keen frost in a night of winter!

Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
A double noise; while at his evening watch
The village dog deters the nightly thief;
The heifer lows; the distant water-fall
Swells in the breeze; and with the hasty tread
Of traveller, the hollow-sounding plain
Shakes from afar.†

In no one subject are common writers more confused and unmeaning, than in their descriptions of rivers, which are generally said only to wind and to murmur, while their qualities and courses are seldom accurately marked. Examine the exactness of the ensuing description, and consider what a perfect idea it communicates to the mind.

Around th' adjoining brook, that purls along
The vocal grove, now fretting o'er a rock,

* Now

* Ver. 176. † Winter, ver. 731.

Now scarcely moving through a reedy pool,
Now starting to a sudden stream, and now
Gently diffus'd into a limpid plain;
A various groupe the herds and flocks compose,
Rural confusion.*

A groupe worthy the pencil of Giacomo da Bassano, and so minutely delineated, that he might have worked from this sketch:

— — — On the grassy bank
Some ruminating lie; while others stand
Half in the flood, and often bending sip
The circling surface. — — —

He adds, that the ox, in the middle of them,

— — — — From his sides
The troublous insects lashes, to his sides
Returning still,†

A natural circumstance, that, to the best of my remembrance, hath escaped even the natural Theocritus. Nor do I recollect that any poet hath been struck with the murmurs of the numberless insects that swarm abroad at the

* Summer, ver. 479. † Summer, ver. 485. et seq.

the noon of a summer's day: as attendants of the evening, indeed, they have been mentioned;

> Resounds the living surface of the ground:
> Nor undelightful is the ceaseless hum
> To him who muses through the woods at noon;
> Or drowsy shepherd, as he lies reclin'd
> With half-shut eyes.*

But the novelty and nature we admire in the descriptions of Thomson, are by no means his only excellencies; he is equally to be praised for impressing on our minds the effects, which the scene delineated would have on the present spectator or hearer. Thus having spoken of the roaring of the savages in a wilderness of Africa, he introduces a captive, who, though just escaped from † prison and slavery under the tyrant of Morocco, is so terrified and astonished at the dreadful uproar, that

> The wretch half wishes for his bonds again.

Thus

* Summer, ver. 280. † Summer, ver. 935.

Thus also having described a caravan lost and overwhelmed in one of those whirlwinds that so frequently agitate and lift up the whole sands of the desert, he finishes his picture by adding, that,

— — — In Cairo's crouded streets,*
Th' impatient merchant, wondering waits in vain,
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.

And thus, lastly, in describing the pestilence that destroyed the British troops at the siege of Carthagena, he has used a circumstance inimitably lively, picturesque and striking to the imagination; for he says, that the admiral not only heard the groans of the sick that echoed from ship to ship, but that he also pensively stood, and listened at midnight to the dashing of the waters, occasioned by throwing the dead bodies into the sea;

Heard, nightly, plung'd into the sullen waves,
The frequent corse.† — — — —

A minute

* Ver. 976. † Ver. 1047.

A minute and particular enumeration of circumstances judiciously selected, is what chiefly discriminates poetry from history, and renders the former, for that reason, a more close and faithful representation of nature than the latter. And if our poets would accustom themselves to contemplate fully every object, before they attempted to describe it, they would not fail of giving their readers more new and more complete images than they generally do.*

These

* A summer evening, for instance, after a shower, has been frequently described: but never, that I can recollect, so justly as in the following lines, whose greatest beauty is that hinted above, a simple enumeration of the appearances of nature, and of what is actually to be seen at such a time. They are not unworthy the correct and pure Tibullus. They were written by the late Mr. Robert Bedingfield, author of the Education of Achilles, a Poem, in Dodsley's Miscellanies.

Vespere sub verno, tandem actis imbribus, æther
Guttatim sparsis rorat apertus aquis.
Aureus abrupto curvamine desuper arcus
Fulget, et ancipiti lumine tingit agros.
Continuò sensus pertentat frigoris aura
Vivida, et insinuans mulcet amænus odor.
Pallentes sparsim accrescunt per pascua fungi,
Lætius et torti graminis herba viret.

Plurimus

These observations on Thomson, which, however, would not have been so large, if there had been already any considerable criticism on his character, might be still augmented by an examination and developement of the beauties in the loves of the Birds, in SPRING, verse 580; a view of the torrid zone in SUMMER, verse 630; the rise of fountains and rivers in AUTUMN, verse 781; a man perishing in the snows, in WINTER, verse 277; the wolves descending from the Alps, and a view of winter within the polar circle, verse 389; which are all of them highly-finished originals, excepting a few

Plurimus annosâ decussus ab arbore limax
In putri lentum tramite sulcat iter.
Splendidus accendit per dumos lampida vermis,
Roscida dum tremulâ semita luce micat.

These are the particular circumstances that usually succeed a shower at that season, and yet these are new, and untouched by any other writer. The Carmina Quadragesimalia, volume the second, printed at Oxford 1748, from whence this is transcribed, (page 14,) contain many copies of exquisite descriptive poetry, in a genuine classical style. See particularly The Rivers, page 4. The Morning, page 12. The House of Care, from Spenser, page 16. The Mahometan Paradise, page 32. The Trees of different soils, page 63. The Bird's Nest, page 82. Geneva, page 89. Virgil's Tomb, page 97. The Indian, page 118. The House of Discord, page 133. Columbus first discovering the land of the West Indies, page 125, &c.

a few of those blemishes intimated above. WINTER is, in my apprehension, the most valuable of these four poems; the scenes of it, like those of Il Penseroso of Milton, being of that awful, solemn, and pensive kind, on which a great genius best delights to dwell.

POPE, it seems, was of opinion, that descriptive poetry is a composition as absurd as a feast made up of sauces: and I know many other persons that think meanly of it. I will not presume to say it is equal, either in dignity or utility, to those compositions that lay open the internal constitution of man, and that IMITATE characters, manners, and sentiments. I may, however, remind such contemners of it, that, in a sister-art, landscape-painting claims the very next rank to history-painting; being ever preferred to single portraits, to pieces of still-life, to droll-figures, to fruit and flower-pieces; that Titian thought it no diminution of his genius, to spend much of his time in works of the former species; and that, if their principles lead them to condemn Thomson, they must also condemn the Georgics of Virgil; and the greatest part of the noblest

descriptive poem extant, I mean that of Lucretius.

We are next to speak of the LYRIC pieces of POPE. He used to declare, that if Dryden had finished a translation of the Iliad, he would not have attempted one after so great a master: he might have said with more propriety, I will not write a music-ode* after Alexander's Feast, which the variety and harmony of its numbers, and the beauty and force of its images, have conspired to place at the head of modern lyric compositions. This of Mr. POPE is, however, the second of the kind.† In the first stanza, every different instrument

* He wrote this Ode at the request of Steele.

† The inferiority of Addison's Ode to POPE's on this subject, is manifest and remarkable. What prosaic tameness and insipidity do we meet with in the following lines!

> Cecilia's name does all our numbers grace,
> From every voice the tuneful accents fly;
> In soaring trebles now it rises high;
> And now it sinks, and dwells upon the base.

This almost descends to burlesque. What follows is hardly rhyme, and surely not poetry:

Consecrate

ment is described and illustrated, in numbers that admirably represent and correspond to its diffe-

 rent

> Consecrate the place and day,
> To music and Cecilia.
> Music, the greatest *good* that mortals know.—
> Music can noble *hints* impart.

There follows in this stanza, which is the third, a description of a subject very trite, Orpheus drawing the beasts about him. Pope shewed his superior judgment in taking no notice of this old story, and selecting a more new, as well as more striking, incident, in the life of Orpheus. It was the custom of this time for almost every rhymer to try his hand in an ode on St. Cecilia; we find many despicable rhapsodies, so called, in the trash of Tonson's Miscellanies. We have there also preserved another, and an earlier ode, of Dryden on this subject; one stanza of which I cannot forbear inserting in this note. It was set to music, 1687, by I. Baptista Draghi.

> What passion cannot music raise and quell!
> When Jubal struck the corded shell,
> His list'ning brethren stood around,
> And wondering on their faces fell,
> To worship that celestial sound:
> Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
> Within the hollow of that shell,
> That spoke so sweetly and so well.
> What passion cannot music raise and quell!

This is so complete and engaging a history-piece, that I knew a person of taste who was resolved to have it executed on one side of his saloon: "In which case, (said he,) the painter has nothing

rent qualities and genius. The beginning of the second stanza, on the power which music exerts over the passions, is a little flat, and by no means equal to the conclusion of that stanza. The animating song that Orpheus* sung to the Argonauts, copied from Valerius Flaccus, (for that of Apollonius is of a different nature,) is the happily chosen subject of the third; on hearing which,

> Each chief his sevenfold shield display'd,
> And half unsheath'd the shining blade;

which effects of the song, however lively, do not equal the force and spirit of what Dryden ascribes to the song of his Grecian artist: for when Timotheus cries out REVENGE, raises the furies, and calls up to Alexander's view a troop of Grecian ghosts, that were slain, and left unburied, inglorious and forgotten, each of them waving a torch in

nothing to do, but to substitute colours for words, the design being finished to his hands." The reader doubtless observes the fine effect of the repetition of the last line; as well as the stroke of nature, in making these rude hearers imagine some god lay concealed in this first musician's instrument.

* He might have enriched his piece by copying the fourth *Pythian* ode of Pindar.

in his hand, and pointing to the hostile temples of the Persians, and demanding vengeance of their prince, he instantly started from his throne,

—Seiz'd a flambeau with zeal to destroy;*

while Thais, and the attendant princes, rushed out with him to set fire to the city. The whole train of imagery in this stanza of Dryden is alive, sublime, and animated to an unparalleled degree: the poet had so strongly possessed himself of the action described, that he places it fully before the eyes of the reader.

The descent of Orpheus into hell is gracefully introduced in the fourth stanza, as it naturally flowed from the subject of the preceding: the description of the infernal regions is well imagined; and the effects of the musician's lyre on the inhabitants of hell, are elegantly translated from the fourth Georgic of Virgil,† and happily

 adapted

* These anapests, for such they are, have a fine effect.

† Ver. 480.

adapted to the subject in question. The supplicating song at the beginning of the fifth stanza, is pathetic and poetical, especially when he conjures the powers below in beautiful trochaics;

> By the heroes' armed shades,
> Glittering through the gloomy glades;
> By the youths that dy'd for love,
> Wand'ring in the myrtle grove.

These images are picturesque and appropriated; and these are such notes as might

> Draw iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
> And make hell grant what love did seek.*

But the numbers that conclude this stanza, are of so burlesque and ridiculous a kind, and have so much the air of a drinking song at a county election, that one is amazed and concerned to find them in a serious ode, and in an ode of a writer eminently skilled, in general, in accommodating his sounds to his sentiments.

Thus

* Milton's Il Penseroso.

Thus song could prevail
O'er death and o'er hell,
A conquest how hard and how glorious!
Tho' fate had fast bound her
With Styx nine times round her,
Yet music and love were victorious.

One would imagine that John Dennis, or some hero of the Dunciad, had been here attempting to travesty this description of the restoration of Eurydice to life. It is observable, that this is the very measure Addison thought was proper to use in the comic character of Sir Trusty; by the introduction of which he has so strangely debased and degraded his elegant opera of Rosamond:

How unhappy is he
That is ty'd to a she,
And fam'd for his wit and his beauty;
For of us pretty fellows
Our wives are so jealous,
They ne'er have enough of our duty.*

These numbers, therefore, according to Addison's ear, conveyed a low and ludicrous idea, instead

* Act I. Scene II. See also, Scene IV. Act I. A song of Grideline and Trusty. Act III. Scene IV.

of being expressive of triumph and exultation, the images here intended to be impressed by POPE.

Virgil is again imitated throughout the sixth stanza, which describes the behaviour of Orpheus on the second loss of Eurydice. I wish POPE had inserted that striking circumstance, so strongly imagined, of a certain melancholy murmur, or rather dismal shriek, that was heard all around the lakes of Avernus, the moment Orpheus looked back on his wife;

—Terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernis.*

And as prosopopeias are a great beauty in lyric poetry, surely he should not have omitted those natural and pathetic exclamations of Eurydice, the moment she was snatched back, and which she uttered as she was gradually sinking to the shades, especially where she movingly takes her last adieu;

Jamque vale! — — —

And

* Georgic, iv. 493.

And adds, that she is now surrounded with a vast darkness, " feror ingenti circumdata nocte;" and in vain stretching out her feeble arms towards him,

Invalidasque tibi tendens, heu! non tua, palmas.*

This lively and pathetic attitude would have made a striking picture under the hands of POPE. The reader, I presume, feels the effect of the judicious placing in the verse, *heu! non tua*, and of its repetition after *tibi*. The places in which Orpheus, according to POPE, made his lamentations, are not so wild, so savage, and dismal, as those mentioned by Virgil: to introduce him " beside the falls of fountains," conveys not such an image of desolation and despair, as the caverns on the banks of Strymon and Tanais, the Hyperborean deserts, and the Riphæan solitudes. And to say of Hebrus, only, that it " rolls in meanders," is flat and frigid, and does not heighten the melancholy of the place. There is an antithesis in the succeeding lines, " he *glows* amid Rhodope's

* Ver. 498.

Rhodope's *snows,*" which I hope the poet did not intend, as it would be a trivial and puerile conceit. The death of Orpheus is expressed with a beautiful brevity and abruptness, suitable to the nature of the ode:

> Hark! Hæmus resounds with the Bacchanals cries,
> Ah! see he dies!
> Yet even in death Eurydice he *sung*.

Instead of *sung*, Virgil says *vocabat*, which is more natural and tender; and Virgil adds a very moving epithet, that he called *miseram* Eurydicen. I am sensible POPE never intended an exact translation of the passages of the Georgics here alleged: I only hint, that, in my humble judgment, he has omitted some of the most striking incidents in the story. I have lately seen a manuscript ode, entitled, "On the Use and Abuse of Poetry," in which Orpheus is considered in another and a higher light, according to ancient mythology, as the first legislator and civilizer of mankind. I shall here insert a stanza of it, containing part of what relates to this subject.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Such was wise Orpheus' moral song,
The lonely cliffs and caves among:
From hollow oak, or mountain-den,
He drew the naked, gazing men;
Or where in turf-built sheds, or rushy bowers,
They shiver'd in cold wintry showers,
Or sunk in heapy snows;
Then sudden, while his melting music stole
With powerful magic o'er each softening soul,
Society, and law, and sacred order rose.

EPODE II.

Father of peace and arts! he first the city built;
No more the neighbour's blood was by his neighbour spilt;
He taught to till, and separate the lands;
He fix'd the roving youths in Hymen's myrtle bands;
Whence dear domestic life began,
And all the charities that soften'd man:
The babes that in their fathers' faces smil'd,
With lisping blandishments their rage beguil'd,
And tender thoughts inspir'd,—&c.

I am not permitted to transcribe any more, and therefore return to POPE again.

The

The beginning of the last stanza of the ode here examined, seems to be a repetition of the subject of the second, the power of music over the passions, which may, perhaps, be reckoned a blameable tautology; especially as these lines,

> Music the fiercest grief can charm,
> And Fate's severest rage disarm;
> Music can soften pain to ease,
> And make despair and madness please;

are inferior, I am afraid, to the former on the same subjects, which contain beautiful and poetical personifications;

> Melancholy lifts her head,
> Morpheus rouses from his bed,
> Sloth unfolds her arms and wakes,
> List'ning Envy drops her snakes;
> Intestine war no more our passions wage,
> And giddy factions hear away their rage.

It is observable, that this Ode of POPE, and the Alexander's Feast of Dryden, conclude with an epigram of four lines; a species of wit as flagrantly unsuitable to the dignity, and as foreign to the nature, of the lyric, as it is of the epic muse.

It

It is to be regretted, that Mr. Handel has not set to music the former, as well as the latter, of these celebrated odes, in which he has displayed the combined powers of verse and voice, to a wonderful degree. No poem, indeed, affords so much various matter for a composer to work upon, as Dryden has here introduced and expressed all the greater passions, and as the transitions from one to the other are sudden and impetuous; of which we feel the effects in the pathetic description of the fall of Darius, that immediately succeeds the joyous praises of Bacchus. The symphony, and air particularly, that accompanies the four words, "fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen," is strangely moving,* and consists of a few simple and touching notes, without any of those

* The mention of this pathetic air, reminds me of a story of the celebrated Lully, who having been one day accused of never setting any thing to music, but the languid verses of Quinault, was immediately animated with the reproach, and, as it were, seized with a kind of enthusiasm; he ran instantly to his harpsichord, and striking a few cords, sung in recitative these four lines in the Iphigenia of Racine, which are full of the strongest imagery, and are therefore much more difficult to express in music, than verses of mere sentiment,

Un

those intricate variations, and affected divisions, into which, in compliance with a vicious and vulgar taste, this great master hath sometimes descended. Even this piece of Handel, so excellent on the whole, is not free from one or two blemishes of this sort, particularly in the air, "With ravished ears," &c.

The moderns have, perhaps, practised no species of poetry with so little success, and with such indisputable inferiority to the ancients, as the ODE; which seems owing to the harshness and

Un prêtre environné d' une foule cruelle
Portera sur ma fille une main criminelle,
Dechirera son sein, et d' un œil curieux.
Dans son cœur palpitant consultera les dieux.

One of the company has often declared, that they all thought themselves present at this dreadful spectacle, and that the notes with which Lully accompanied these words, erected the hair of their heads with horror.

The opinion of Boileau concerning music is remarkable; he asserts, Qu'on ne peut jamais faire un bon opera; parceque la musique ne sauroit narrer; que les passions n'y peuvent etre peinte dans toute l'etenduë qu'elles demandent; que d'ailleurs elle ne sauroit souvent mettre en chant les expressions vraiment sublimes et courageuses.

and untuneableness of modern languages, abounding in monosyllables, and crowded with consonants. This particularly is the case of the English, whose original is Teutonic, and which, therefore, is not so musical as the Italian, the Spanish, or even the French, as not having so great a quantity of words derived from the Latin. But the Latin language itself, as well as all others, must yield to the unparalleled sweetness and copiousness of the Greek. Tantò est sermo græcus latino jucundior, (says Quintilian,) ut nostri poetæ, quoties dulce carmen esse voluerunt, illorum id nominibus exornent."* What line, even in the Italian poets, is so soft and mellifluous, as†

Αλλ'

* He gives some instances that are curious, and worth attention. "Quid quod pleraque nos illa quasi mugiente literâ cludimus M, quâ nullum Græcè verbum cadit? At illi N jucundam et in fine præcipuè quasi tinnientem, illius loco ponunt, quæ est apud nos rarissimè in clausulis. Quid quod syllabæ nostræ in B literam et D innituntur? adeò asperè, ut plerique non antiquissimorum quidem, sed tamen veterum mollire tentaverint, non solum *aversa* pro *adversis* dicendo, sed et in præpositione B literæ absonam et ipsam S subjiciendo." Apply these observations with proper alterations to the English tongue. Quintil. l. xii. c. 10.

† Odys. iv. 565.

Αλλ' αιει ξεφυξοιο λιγυπνειοιλας αηδας?

Or as, in the tender Bion,

Αιαζω τον Αδωνιν, απωλεσο καλος Αδωνις;

to instance in no more? If we cast a transient view over the most celebrated of the modern lyrics, we may observe, that the stanza of * Petrarch, which has been adopted by all his successors, displeases the ear, by its tedious uniformity,

* Petrarch was taught the Greek language, which was at that time unknown in Italy, by Barlaham, a learned monk of Calabria; which country having been a colony of Greeks, retained some traces of their tongue. Soon afterwards Boccace learned Greek of Leontius Pilatus, of Thessalonica, who explained Homer to him for three years; after which time Boccace founded a lecture for the explanation of the Iliad and Odyssey. After Boccace's death, the republic of Florence invited Emanuel Chrysoloras, a nobleman of Constantinople, to open an academy for teaching the Greek language about the year 1394. This Chrysoloras came into England, to solicit Richard II. to enter into an alliance against the Turks. Among his scholars were Leonardus Aretinus, Paulus Vergerius, Guarinus, Leonicenus, Typhernas, Philelphus, and other famous writers. Petrarch died in the year 1374. Boccace in 1376. Chaucer in 1400. The Greek tongue was brought into England by William Grocyn. He was fellow of New College, in Oxford, and died about the year 1520.

mity, and by the number of identical cadences. And, indeed, to speak the truth, there appears to be little valuable in Petrarch, except the purity of his diction. His sentiments, even of love, are metaphysical, and far fetched; neither is there much variety in his subjects, or fancy in his method of treating them. Metastasio is a much better lyric poet. When Boileau attempted an ode, he exhibited a glaring proof, of what has frequently been hinted in the course of this Essay, that the writer whose grand characteristical talent is satiric or moral poetry, will never succeed, with equal merit, in the higher branches of his art. In his ode on the taking Namur, are instances of the* BOMBASTIC, of the PROSAIC, and of the PUERILE. And it is no small confir-

* An instance of the FIRST is to be found in the third stanza. Of the SECOND, in the ninth stanza.

Qui domta Lille, Coutrai,
Gand, la superbe Espagnole,
Saint Omer, Bezançon, Dole,
Ypres, Mastricht, et Cambrai.

Of the THIRD sort, is his making a star or comet fatal to his enemies, of the white feather which the king usually wore in his hat.

mation of the ruling passion of this author, that he could not conclude his ode, but with a severe stroke on his old antagonist Perrault, though the majesty of this species of compositions are so much injured by descending to personal satire. The name of Malherbe is respectable, as he was the first reformer of the French poesy, and the first who gave his countrymen any idea of a legitimate ode; though his own pieces have hardly any thing but harmony to recommend them. The Odes of la Motte, though so highly praised by Sanadon, and by Fontenelle, are fuller of delicate sentiment, and philosophical reflection, than of imagery, figures, and poetry. There are particular stanzas eminently good, but not one entire ode. Some of Rousseau, particularly that to Fortune, and some of his psalms; and one or two of Voltaire, particularly to the king of Prussia, on his accession to the throne, and on Maupertuis's travels to the north, to measure the degrees of the meridian towards the equator; seem to arise above that correct mediocrity which distinguishes the lyric poetry of the French. In this ode of Voltaire, we find a prosopopeia of Americus, and afterwards a speech of Newton, on the

the design of this traveller and his companions, that approach to the sublime;

Comme ils parloient ainsi, Newton dans l'empirée,
Newton les regardoit, et du ciel entr'ouvert.
Confirmez, disoit il, a la terre eclairée
Ce que j'ai decouvert.

I hope I shall not transgress a very sensible observation of POPE, who would have a true critic be

Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame,

if I should say, we have lately seen two or three lyric pieces superior to any he has left us; I mean an Ode on Lyric Poetry, and another to Lord Huntingdon, by Dr. Akenside; and a Chorus of British Bards, by Mr. Gilbert West, at the end of the Institution of the Order of the Garter.* Both these are written with regular returns of the Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode, which give a truly

* Together with some of the Odes of Mr. William Collins, who had a strong and fruitful imagination; and the Chorus on *Death* in Mr. Mason's Caractacus.

Pindaric variety to the numbers, that is wanting not only to the best French and Italian, but even to the best Latin odes. In the pieces here commended, the figures are strong, and the transitions bold, and there is a just mixture of sentiment and imagery; and particularly, they are animated with a noble spirit of liberty. I must refer the reader to the characters of Alcæus and of Milton in the two first, and to the stanza of Mr. West's Ode on the Barons procuring Magna Charta, which I shall insert at length.

On yonder plain,
Along whose willow-fringed side
The silver-footed Naiads sportive train,
Down the smooth Thames amid the cygnets glide,
I saw, when at thy reconciling word,
Injustice, anarchy, intestine jar,
Despotic insolence, the wasting sword,
And all the brazen throats of civil war
Were hush'd in peace; from this imperious throne
Hurl'd furious down,
Abash'd, dismay'd,
Like a chas'd lion to the savage shade
Of his own forests fell Oppression fled,
With vengeance brooding in his sullen breast.
Then Justice fearless rais'd her decent head,
Heal'd every grief, each wrong redrest;

While

While round her valiant squadrons stood,
And bade her awful tongue demand,
From vanquish'd John's reluctant hand,
The DEED OF FREEDOM purchas'd with their blood.*

The next LYRIC compositions of POPE, are two choruses inserted in a very heavy tragedy altered from Shakespeare by the Duke of Buckingham; in which we see that the most accurate observation of dramatic rules without genius is of no effect. These choruses are extremely elegant and harmonious; but are they not chargeable with the fault which Aristotle imputes to many of Euripides, that they are foreign and adventitious to the subject, and contribute nothing towards the advancement of the main action? Whereas the chorus ought, "Μοριον ειναι τϐ ὁλϐ, και συναγωνιζεσθαι,"† to be a part or member of the one Whole, co-operate with, and help to accelerate the intended

* Dodsley's Miscellanies, vol. ii. page 152. See also in the same volume, an excellent ode of Mr. Cobb. From another of whose odes Pope took the following line;

Thy stone, O Sisyphus, stands still.

† Κεφ. ιη. περι ποιητικης.

tended event; as is constantly, adds the philosopher, the practice of Sophocles. Whereas these reflections of POPE on the baneful influences of war, on the arts and learning, and on the universal power of love, seem to be too general, are not sufficiently appropriated, do not rise from the subject and occasion, and might be inserted with equal propriety in twenty other tragedies. This remark of Aristotle, though he does not himself produce any examples, may be verified from the following, among many others. In the Phœnicians of Euripides, they sing a long and very beautiful, but ill-placed, hymn to Mars; I speak of that which begins so nobly,

Ω πολυμοχθος Αρης, τι ποθ' αιμαλι
Και θαναλω καλεχη, Βρομιε παραμεσος εορταις;*

"O, direful Mars! why art thou still delighted with blood and with death, and why an enemy to the feasts of Bacchus?" And a still more glaring instance may be brought from the end of the third act of the Troades, in which the

* Ver. 793.

the story of Ganymede is introduced not very artificially.* To these may be added that exquisite ode in praise of Apollo, descriptive of his birth and victories, which we find in the Iphigenia in Tauris.†

On the other hand, the choruses of Sophocles never desert the subject of each particular drama, and all their sentiments and reflections are drawn from the situation of the principal personage of the fable. Nay, Sophocles hath artfully found a method of making those poetical descriptions, with which the choruses of the ancients abound, carry on the chief design of the piece; and has by these means accomplished what is a great difficulty in writing tragedy, has united poetry with propriety. In the ‡ Philoctetes the chorus takes a natu-

 ral

* Ver. 795. † Ver 1235. et seq.

‡ The subject and scene of this tragedy, so romantic and uncommon, are highly pleasing to the imagination. See particularly his description of his being left in this desolate island, v. 280. His lamentation for the loss of his bow, v. 1140. and also 1185. and his last adieu to the island, 1508.

One

ral occasion, at verse 694, to give a minute and moving picture of the solitary life of that unfortunate hero; and when afterwards, at verse 855, pain has totally exhausted the strength and spirits of Philoctetes, and it is necessary for the plot of the tragedy that he should fall asleep, it is then that the chorus breaks out into an exquisite ode to sleep. As in the Antigone, with equal beauty and decorum in an address to the god of love, at verse 791 of that play. And thus, lastly, when the birth of Œdipus is doubtful, and his parents unknown, the chorus suddenly exclaims, "Τις σε, τεκνον, τις σ' ἐλιχλε των. μακραιωνων; &c. From which, O my son, of the immortal gods, didst thou spring? Was it some nymph, a favourite of Pan, that haunts the mountains, or some daughter of Apollo, (for this god loves the remote rocks and caverns,) who bore you? Or was it Mercury, who reigns in Cyllene? or did Bacchus,

One may here observe by the way, that the ancients thought bodily pains, and wounds, &c. proper objects to be represented on the stage. See also the Trachiniæ of Sophocles, and the lamentations of Hercules in it.

chus, Θεος ναιων επ' ακρων ορεων, a god who dwells on the tops of the mountains, beget you, on any of the nymphs that possess Helicon, with whom he frequently sports?*

The judicious author of the Tragedy of Elfrida, hath given occasion to a kind of controversy among the more curious critics, concerning the utility of the chorus, which, after the model of the ancients, he hath endeavoured to revive. That the great Grecian masters retained it only out of respect to its antiquity, and from no intrinsic valuableness or propriety of the thing, can scarcely be imagined. The sentiments of the judicious Brumoy are moderate and rational, and seem to comprehend all that is necessary to be said on this subject. "I know (says he) the chorus is attended with inconveniences. Sophocles had the address to withdraw his chorus for a few moments, when their absence was necessary, as in the Ajax. If the chorus, therefore, incommodes the poet, and puts him under difficulties, he must charge it solely to his own want of dexterity.

* Oιδπ. τυραν. 1118.

terity. What advantage, on the other hand, may he not reap from a body of actors that fill the stage; that render more lively, striking, and sensible, the continuity of the action, and give it the air of greater PROBABILITY? For it is not natural, or conceivable, that a great and illustrious action, such as a revolution in a state, should pass without witnesses. We perceive and feel a kind of void on the stage, on account of the absence of the choruses; and the successful attempt of Racine, who adopted and revived the use of them in his ATHALIA and ESTHER, were sufficient, one would imagine, to undeceive, and convince us of their importance and utility. The ancients treated only of such stories as were publicly transacted: now the banishment of the chorus has been the necessary consequence of the custom of the moderns, in taking for their representations all kinds of subjects, and in filling and overcharging the action with incidents and surprises. For how could these various crowded events and incidents have been possibly introduced in a public place, exposed to the view of courtiers and the people; while

the generality of OUR tragedies turn on particular and private affairs, removed from the view and notice of all men? The Athenian spectators were ever accustomed to concern themselves in all public affairs, and to be witnesses and judges of them. The modern stage, by its disuse of the chorus, may, perhaps, have gained a great number of fine subjects for tragedy; yet, in return, it is burthened with confidents, it loses the continuity of action, and is deprived of the magnificent spectacle that serves to support that continuity, and which is, if I may be allowed the expression, the accompagnient of the picture."*

I thought it more equitable, as well as more convincing, to quote at large the words of this admirable critic, whose work is one of the most valuable that his elegant nation has produced, than to adopt, as some have done, with small variations, his opinion, without acknowledging the debt. An apology would be necessary

* Le Theatre de Grecs. Tom. i. 104. and 214. and 198.

necessary for this digression, if it was not my professed design, in this Essay, to expatiate into such occasional disquisitions as naturally arise from the subject: it has, however, kept us too long from surveying a valuable literary curiosity; I mean the earliest production of POPE, written when he was not twelve years old, his ODE ON SOLITUDE.

The first sketches of such an artist ought highly to be prized. Different geniuses unfold themselves at different periods of life. In some minds the ore is a long time in ripening. Not only inclination, but opportunity and encouragement, a proper subject, or a proper patron, influence the exertion or the suppression of genius. These stanzas on Solitude, are a strong instance of that contemplative and moral turn which was the distinguishing characteristic of our poet's mind. An ode of Cowley, which he produced at the age of thirteen years, is of the same cast, and perhaps not in the least inferior to this of POPE. The voluminous Lopez de Vega, is commonly, but perhaps incredibly, reported by

by the Spaniards, to have composed verses when he was * five years old; and Torquato Tasso, the second or third of the Italian poets, (for that wonderful original, Dante, is the first,) is said to have recited poems and orations of his own writing when he was seven. It is, however, certain, which is more extraordinary, that he produced his Rinaldo in his eighteenth year; no bad precursor to the Gierusalemma Liberata; and no small effort of that genius, which was, in due time, to shew, how fine an epic poem the Italian language, notwithstanding the vulgar imputation of effeminacy, was capable of supporting.†

Those who are fond of biographical anecdotes, which are some of the most amusive and instructive parts of history, will be, perhaps, pleased with the following particulars in the life of POPE. He frequently declared, that the time of his beginning to write verses was so very early in his life, that he could scarcely recall it to his memory. When

* It is a certain fact, that S. Bononcini composed and performed an opera when he was but nine years old.

† But the Italians, in general, prefer Ariosto to Tasso.

When he was yet a child, his father, who had been a merchant in London, and retired to Binfield with about twenty thousand pounds, would frequently order him to make English verses. It seems he was difficult to be pleased, and would make the lad correct them again and again. When at last he approved them, he took great pleasure in perusing them, and would say, "These are good RHYMES." These early praises of a tender and respected * parent, co-operating with the natural inclination of the son, might possibly be the causes that fixed our young bard in a resolution of becoming eminent in this art. He was taught to read very early by an aunt; and of his own indefatigable industry, learned to write, by copying printed books, which he executed with great neatness and accuracy. When he was eight years old, he was put under the direction of one Taverner, a priest, who taught him the rudiments of the Latin and Greek tongues together. About this time he accidentally met with Ogilby's translation of Homer, which,

* Most of these circumstances were communicated by Pope himself to Mr. Spence.

which, notwithstanding the deadness and insipidity of the versification, arrested his attention by the force of the story. The Ovid of Sandys fell next in his way; and it is said, that the raptures these translations gave him were so strong, that he spoke of them with pleasure to the latest period of his life. About ten, being now at school at Hyde-Park-Corner, whither he went from a Popish seminary to Twiford, near Winchester, he was carried sometimes to the playhouse; and being struck, we may imagine, with theatrical representations, he turned the chief events into a kind of play, made up of a number of speeches from Ogilby's translation, connected with verses of his own. He persuaded the upper boys to act this piece, which, from its curiosity, one would have been glad to have beheld. The master's gardener represented the character of Ajax; and the actors were dressed after the pictures of his favourite Ogilby; far the best part of that book, as they were designed and engraved by artists of note. At twelve, he retired with his father into Windsor-Forest; and it was there he first perused the writings of Waller, of Spenser,

Spenser, and of Dryden.* Spenser is said to have made a poet of Cowley: that Ogilby should give our author his first poetic pleasures, is a remarkable circumstance. On the first sight of Dryden, he abandoned the rest, having now found an author whose cast was exactly congenial with his own. His works, therefore, he studied with equal pleasure and attention: he placed them before his eyes as a model; of which more will be said in the course of these papers. He copied not only his harmonious versification, but the very turns of his periods. It was hence he was enabled to give to rhyme all the harmony of which it is capable.

About this time, when he was † fifteen years old, he began to write his ALCANDER, an epic poem, of which he himself speaks with so much amiable

* I was informed by an intimate friend of POPE, that when he was yet a mere boy, Dryden gave him a shilling, by way of encouragement, for a translation he had made of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid.

† Nec placet ante annos vates puer: omnia justo
Tempore proveniant. — — — Vidæ Poet. l. i.

amiable frankness and ingenuity, in a passage restored to the excellent preface before his works. "I confess there was a time when I was in love with myself, and my first productions were the children of self love upon innocence. I had made an epic poem, and panegyrics on all the princes of Europe, and I thought myself the greatest genius that ever was. I cannot but regret these delightful visions of my childhood, which, like the fine colours we see when our eyes are shut, are vanished for ever." Atterbury had perused this early piece, and, we may gather from one of his letters, advised him to burn it; though he adds, "I would have interceded for the first page, and put it, with your leave, among my curiosities." I have been credibly informed, that some of the anonymous verses, quoted as examples of the *Art of Sinking in Poetry*, in the incomparable satire so called, were such as our poet remembered from his own ALCANDER. So sensible of its own errors and imperfections is a mind truly great.

QUINTILIAN, whose knowledge of human nature was consummate, has observed, that no-

thing quite correct and faultless, is to be expected in very early years, from a truly elevated genius; that a generous extravagance and exuberance are its proper marks; and that a premature exactness is a certain evidence of future flatness and sterility. His words are incomparable, and worthy consideration.* "Audeat hæc ætas plura, et INVENIAT, et inventis gaudeat, sint licet illa non satis interim sicca et severa. Facile remedium est ubertatis, sterilia nullo labore vincuntur. Illa mihi in pueris natura nimium spei dabit, in quâ INGENIUM judicio præsumitur. Materiam esse primum volo vel abundantiorem, atque ultra quam oportet fusam. Multum inde decoquent anni, multum ratio limabit, aliquid velut usu ipso deteretur, sit modo unde excidi possit et quod exculpi: erit autem, si non ab initio tenuem laminam duxerimus, et quam cælatura altior rumpat—Quare mihi ne maturitas quidem ipsa festinet, nec musta in lacu statim austera sint; sic et annos ferent, et vetustate proficient." This is very strong and masculine sense, expressed and enlivened by a train of

* Lib. ii. Instit. Cap. 4. ad init.

of metaphors, all of them elegant, and well preserved. Whether these early productions of POPE would not have appeared to Quintilian to be rather too finished, correct, and pure, and what he would have inferred concerning them, is too delicate a subject for me to enlarge upon. Let me rather add an entertaining anecdote. When Guido and Domenichino had each of them painted a picture in the church of Saint Andrew, Annibal Carrache, their master, was pressed to declare which of his two pupils had excelled. The picture of Guido represented Saint Andrew on his knees before the cross; that of Domenichino represented the flagellation of the same apostle. Both of them in their different kinds were capital pieces, and were painted in fresco, opposite each other, to eternize, as it were, their rivalship and contention. "Guido (said Carrache) has performed as a master, and Domenichino as a scholar. But (added he) the work of the scholar is more valuable than that of the master." In truth, one may perceive faults in the pictures of Domenichino that Guido has avoided; but then there are noble strokes not to be found in that of his rival. It was easy to discern a genius that

promised to produce beauties, to which the sweet, the gentle and the graceful Guido would never aspire.

The last piece that belongs to this section, is the ODE entitled THE DYING CHRISTIAN TO HIS SOUL, written in imitation of the well known sonnet of Hadrian, addressed to his departing spirit; concerning which it was our author's judicious opinion, that the diminutive epithets with which it abounds, such as Vagula, Blandula, were by no means expressions of levity and indifference, but rather of endearment, of tenderness and concern. This ode was written, we find, at the desire of Steele; and our poet, in a letter to him on that occasion, says, "You have it, as Cowley calls it, just warm from the brain; it came to me the first moment I waked this morning; yet you'll see it was not so absolutely inspiration, but that I had in my head not only the verses of Hadrian, but the fine fragment of Sappho."*

It

* In Longinus, sect. 10. quoted by him, as a model of that Sublime which combines together many various and opposite passions and sensations, "Ινα μη ἐν τι παθος φαιηται, παθων δε ΣΥΝΟΔΟΣ."

It is possible, however, that our author might have had another composition in his head, besides those he here refers to; for there is a close and surprising resemblance* between this ode of POPE, and one of an obscure and forgotten rhymer of the age of Charles the Second, namely, Thomas Flatman; from whose dunghill, as well as from the dregs of † Crashaw, of Carew, of Herbert, and others, (for it is well known he was a great reader of all those poets,) POPE has very judiciously collected gold. And the following stanza is perhaps the only valuable one Flatman‡ has produced:

When on my sick bed I languish,
Full of sorrow, full of anguish,
Fainting, gasping, trembling, crying,
Panting, groaning, speechless, dying;
Methinks I hear some gentle spirit say,
Be not fearful, come away!

* See THE ADVENTURER, vol. II. 2d ed. p. 230. published 1753.

† Crashaw has very well translated the Dies Iræ, to which translation Roscommon is much indebted, in his Poem on the Day of Judgment.

‡ Of whom says Lord Rochester,

Not

The third and fourth lines are eminently good and pathetic, and the climax well preserved; the very turn of them is closely copied by POPE; as is likewise the striking circumstance of the dying man's imagining he hears a voice calling him away:

> Vital spark of heavenly flame,
> Quit, O quit, this mortal frame;
> Trembling, hoping, ling'ring, flying;
> O the pain, the bliss of dying!
> Hark! they whisper! angels say,
> Sister spirit, come away!

I am sensible of the difficulty of distinguishing resemblances from thefts; and well know, that a want of seeming originality arises frequently, not from a barrenness and timidity of genius, but from invincible necessity, and the nature of things: that the works of those who profess an art, whose essence is imitation, must needs be stamped with a close resemblance to each other, since the objects material or animate, extraneous or

> Not that slow drudge in swift Pindaric strains,
> Flatman, who Cowley imitates with pains,
> And rides a jaded muse, whipt, with loose reins.

or internal, which they all imitate, lie equally open to the observation of all, and are perfectly similar. Descriptions, therefore, that are faithful and just, MUST BE UNIFORM AND ALIKE: the first copier may be, perhaps, entitled to the praise of priority; but a succeeding one ought not certainly to be condemned for plagiarism.

These general observations, however true, do not, I think, extend to the case before us; because not only the thoughts, but even the words, are copied; and because the images, especially the last, are such as are not immediately impressed by sensible objects, and which, therefore, on account of their SINGULARITY, did not lie in common for any poet to seize. Let us, however, moderate the matter, and say, what, perhaps, is the real fact, that POPE fell into the thoughts of Flatman unawares, and without design; and having formerly read him, imperceptibly adopted this passage, even without knowing that he had borrowed it. That this will frequently happen, is evident from the following curious particulars related by Menage, which, because much has been said of late on this head by many writers of

criticism, I shall here insert. "I have often heard M. Chapelain, and M. Dandilly, declare, that they wrote the following line:

D' arbitres de la paix, de foudres de la guerre,

without knowing it was in Malherbe; and the moment I am making this remark, recollect that the same thing happened to M. Furetire. I have often heard Corneille declare, that he inserted in his Polyeucte, two celebrated lines concerning fortune, without knowing they were the property of M. Godeau, Bishop of Vence;

Et comme elle a l' eclat du Verre
Elle en a la fragilité——

Godeau had inserted them in an ode to Cardinal Richlieu, fifteen years before Polyeucte was written. Porphyry, in a fragment of his book on Philology, quoted by Eusebius, in the tenth book of his *Evangelical Preparation*, makes mention of an author, named Aretades, who composed an entire treatise on this sort of resemblances. And St. Jerome relates, that his preceptor, Donatus, explaining that sensible passage in Terence, "Nihil

"Nihil est dictum quod non sit dictum prius," railed severely at the ancients, for taking from him his best thoughts; "Pereant qui ante nos, nostra dixerunt."*

Menage makes these observations on occasion of a passage in the Poetics of Vida, intended to justify borrowing the thoughts, and even expressions, of others, which passage is very applicable to the subject before us:

Aspice ut exuvias, veterumque insignia, nobis
Aptemus; rerum accipimus nunc clara reperta,
Nunc seriem atq; animum verborum, verba quoque ipsa;
Nec pudet interdum alterius nos ore locutos.†

Menage adds, that he intended to compile a regular treatise on the thefts and imitations of the poets. As his reading was very extensive, his work would probably have been very entertaining. For surely it is no trivial amusement, to trace an applauded sentiment or description to its source,

* Anti-Baillet, tom. ii. pag. 207.

† Lib. iii. v. 255.

source, and to remark, with what* judgment and art it is adapted and inserted; provided this be done with such a spirit of modesty and candour, as evidently shews, the critic intends merely to gratify curiosity, and not to indulge envy, malignity, and a petulant desire of dethroning established† reputations. Thus, for instance, says the Rambler, "It can scarcely be doubted, that in the first of the following passages, POPE remembered OVID; and that in the second,‡ he copied CRASHAW; because there is a concurrence of more resemblances than can be imagined to have happened by chance.

Sæpe pater dixit, studium quid inutile tentas?
Mæonides nullas ipse reliquit opes——
Sponte suâ carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,
Et quod conabar scribere, versus erat.

OVID.

I left

* Dryden says prettily of Ben Jonson's many imitations of the ancients, "You *track* him every where in their SNOW."

† See the fruitless and impudent attack of Lauder on Milton.

‡ The Works of Cardinal Bembo, and of Casa, of Annibal Caro, and Tasso himself, are full of entire lines taken from Dante and Petrarch.

I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobey'd;
While yet a child, e'er yet a fool to fame,
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came. POPE.

—— This plain floor,
Believe me, reader, can say more
Than many a braver marble can,
Here lies a truly honest man. CRASHAW.

This modest stone, what few vain marbles can,
May truly say, "here lies an honest man."
POPE.*

Two other critics have also remarked some farther remarkable coincidences of POPE's thought and expressions, with those of other writers, which are here inserted, as they cannot fail of entertaining the curious.

Pride, malice, folly, against Dryden rose,
In various shapes of parsons, critics, beaus. POPE.

L'ignorance, et l' erreur a ses naissantes pieces,†
En habits de marquis, en robes de comtesses,
Venoient pour diffamer son chef d'œuvre nouveau.
BOILEAU.

Superior

* Rambler, No. 143.

† Of Moliere.

Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man unfold all Nature's law,
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And shew'd a Newton as we shew an ape.

POPE.

Simia cœlicolum risusque jocusque deorum est,
Tunc homo, quum temerè ingenio confidit, et audet
Abdita naturæ scrutari, arcanaque divum.

PALINGENIUS.

— — — Happily to steer,
From grave to gay, from lively to severe.

POPE.

— — — D' une voix legere
Passer du grave au doux, du plaisant au severe.

BOILEAU.

The conclusion of the epitaph on Gay, where he observes, that his honour consists not in being entombed among kings and heroes,

But that the worthy and the good may say,
Striking their pensive bosoms, *here* lies GAY,

is adopted from an old Latin elegy on the death of Prince Henry. This conceit of his friend's being enshrined in the hearts of the virtuous, is, by

by the way, one of the most forced, and far-fetched, that POPE has fallen into.*

Jonson, as another critic has remarked, wrote an Elegy on the Lady Anne Pawlet, Marchioness of Winton; the beginning of which POPE seems to have thought of, when he wrote his Verses to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady. Jonson begins his elegy,

> What gentle ghost, besprent with April dew,
> Hayles me so solemnly to yonder yew?
> And beckoning woes me———.†

In which strain POPE beautifully breaks out,

> What beck'ning ghost along the moonlight shade,
> Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?
> 'Tis she!——

As Jonson now lies before me, I may, perhaps be pardoned for pointing out another passage in him,

* See the Adventurer, No. 63, where other borrowed passages are pointed out, particularly from Pascal, Charron, and Wollaston.

† In the underwood.

him, which POPE probably remembered when he wrote the following:

> From shelves to shelves, see greedy Vulcan roll,
> And lick up all their physic of the soul.*

Thus Jonson, speaking of a parcel of books,

> These, hadst thou pleas'd either to dine or sup,
> Had'e made a meale for Vulcan to lick up.†

I should be sensibly touched at the injurious imputation of so ungenerous, and, indeed, impotent a design, as that of attempting to diminish or sully the reputation of so valuable a writer as POPE, by the most distant hint, or accusation of his being a plagiary; a writer to whom the English poesy, and the English language, is everlastingly indebted. But we may say of his imitations, what his poetical father, Dryden, said of another, who deserved not such a panegyric so justly as our author: "HE INVADES AUTHORS LIKE A MONARCH; AND WHAT WOULD BE

* Dunciad.

† See OBSERVATIONS on the FAERIE QUEENE of SPENSER, by Thomas Warton, sect. vii. p. 166.

BE THEFT IN OTHER POETS, IS ONLY VICTORY IN HIM."* For, indeed, he never works on the same subject with another, without heightening the piece with more masterly strokes, and a more artful pencil. Those who flattered themselves, that they should diminish the reputation of Boileau, by printing, in the manner of a commentary at the bottom of each page of his works, the many lines he has borrowed from Horace and Juvenal, were grossly deceived. The verses of the ancients, which this poet hath turned into French with so much address, and which he hath happily made so homogeneous, and of a piece with the rest of the work, that every thing seems to have been conceived in a continued train of thought by the very same person, confer as much honor on M. Despreaux as the verses which are purely his own. The original turn which he gives to his translations, the boldness of his expressions, so little forced and unnatural, that they seem to be born, as it were, with his thoughts, display almost as much invention as the first production of a thought entirely new. This

* On Dram. Poesy, p. 61.

This induced La Bruyere to say, "Que Despreaux paroissoit creer les pensees d' autrui." Both he and POPE might have answered their* accusers, in the words with which Virgil is said to have replied to those who accused him of borrowing all that was valuable in his Æneid from Homer, "CUR NON ILLI QUOQUE EADEM FURTA TENTARENT? VERUM INTELLECTUROS, FACILIUS ESSE HERCULI CLAVUM, QUAM HOMERO VERSUM, SURRIPERE."†

SECTION

* The Jesuits, that wrote the journals of Trevoux, strongly object plagiarism to Boileau.

† Donat. in Vit. Virgil.

SECTION III.

OF THE ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

WE are now arrived at a poem of that species, for which our author's genius was particularly turned, the DIDACTIC and the MORAL; it is, therefore, as might be expected, a master-piece in its kind. I have been sometimes inclined to think, that the praises Addison has bestowed on it, were a little partial and invidious. "The observations (says he) follow one another like those in Horace's Art of Poetry, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose writer."* It is, however, certain, that the poem before us is by no means destitute of a just integrity, and a lucid order: each of the precepts and remarks naturally introduce the succeeding

* Spectator, No. 253.

ceeding ones, so as to form an entire whole. The ingenious Dr. Hurd hath also endeavoured to shew, that Horace observed a strict method, and unity of design, in his Epistle to the Pisones; and that, although the connexions are delicately fine, and almost imperceptible, like the secret hinges of a well-wrought box, yet they artfully and closely unite each part together, and give coherence, uniformity and beauty to the work. The Spectator adds, "The observations in this essay are *some* of them *uncommon*." There is, I fear, a small mixture of ill-nature in these words: for this ESSAY, though on a beaten subject, abounds in many new remarks, and original rules, as well as in many happy and beautiful illustrations, and applications, of the old ones. We are, indeed, amazed to find such a knowledge of the world, such a maturity of judgment, and such a penetration into human nature, as are here displayed, in so very young a writer as was POPE when he produced this ESSAY, for he was not twenty years old. Correctness, and a just taste, are usually not attained but by long practice and experience in any art; but a clear head, and strong sense, were the characteristical

qualities of our author; and every man soonest displays his radical excellencies. If his predominant talent be warmth and vigor of imagination, it will break out in fanciful and luxuriant descriptions, the colouring of which will, perhaps, be too rich and glowing. If his chief force lies in the understanding rather than in the imagination, it will soon appear by solid and manly observations on life or learning, expressed in a more chaste and subdued style. The former will frequently be hurried into obscurity or turgidity, and a false grandeur of diction; the latter will seldom hazard a figure, whose usage is not already established, or an image beyond common life; will always be perspicuous, if not elevated; will never disgust, if not transport, his readers; will avoid the grosser faults, if not arrive at the greater beauties, of composition. The "eloquentiæ genus," for which he will be distinguished, will not be the "plenum et erectum, et audax, et præcelsum," but the "pressum, et mite, et limatum."* In the earliest letters of POPE to Wycherly, to Walsh, and Cromwell, we

* Quintil. l. xi. c. i.

find many admirable and acute judgments of men and books, and an intimate acquaintance not only with some of the best Greek and Roman, particularly the latter, but the most celebrated of the French and Italian classics.

Du Bos* fixes the period of time at which, generally speaking, the poets and the painters have arrived at as high a pitch of perfection as their geniuses will permit, to be the age of thirty years, or a few years more or less. Virgil was near thirty when he composed his first Eclogue. Horace was a grown man when he began to be talked of at Rome as a poet, having been formerly engaged in a busy military life. Racine was about the same age when his ANDROMACHE, which may be regarded as his first good tragedy, was played. Corneille was more than thirty when his CID appeared. Despreaux was full thirty when he published his satires, such as we now have them. Moliere was full forty when he wrote the first of those comedies on which his reputation is founded. But to excel in this species

* Sect. x. 2.

cies of composition, it was not sufficient for Moliere to be only a great poet; it was rather necessary for him to gain a thorough knowledge of men and the world, which is seldom attained so early in life; but without which, the best poet would be able to write but very indifferent comedies. Congreve, however, was but nineteen when he wrote his Old Bachelor. Raphäel was about thirty years old when he displayed the beauty and sublimity of his genius in the Vatican; for it is there we behold the first of his works that are worthy the great name he at present so deservedly possesses. When Shakespear wrote his LEAR, Milton his PARADISE LOST, Spenser his FAIRY QUEEN, and Dryden his MUSIC ODE, they had all exceeded the middle age of man.

From this short review it appears, that few poets ripened so early as POPE; who seems literally and strictly to have fulfilled the precept of Horace in each of its circumstances;

Multa tulit, fecitque PUER.

He was laborious and indefatigable in his pursuits of learning;

— — — Sudavit et alsit.

And, above all, what is of the greatest consequence in preserving each faculty of the mind in due vigour,

Abstinuit venere et vino.—

These are the two temptations to which a youthful bard is principally subject, and into whose snares he generally falls. If the imagination be lively, the passions will be strong. True genius seldom resides in a cold and phlegmatic constitution. The same temperament, and the same sensibility, that makes a poet or a painter, will be apt to make a man a lover and a debauchee. POPE was happily secured from these common failings, the bane of so many others, by the weakness and delicacy of his body, and the bad state of his health. The sensual vices were too violent for so tender a frame; he never deviated into a course of intemperance and dissipation. May I add, that even his bodily make was of use to him as a writer; for one, who was acquainted with the heart of man, and the secret springs of our

our actions, has observed with great penetration, "* It is good to consider deformity, not as a signe, which is more deceivable, but as a cause, which seldom faileth of the effect. Whosoever hath any thing fixed in his person, that doth induce contempt, hath also a perpetual spur in himself, to rescue and deliver himself from scorne." I do not think it improbable, that this circumstance might animate our poet to double his diligence to make himself distinguished: and hope I shall not be accused, by those who have a knowledge of human nature, of assigning his desire of excellence, to a motive too mean and sordid, as well as too weak and inefficacious, to operate such an effect.

What crops of wit and honesty appear,
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate, or fear!
See anger, zeal, and fortitude, supply,
Ev'n Avarice, prudence; Sloth, philosophy;
Nor virtue male or female can we name,
But what will grow on pride, or grow on shame.†

* Bacon's Essays, xliv.

† Essay on Man, ep. ii. v. 185.

It was another circumstance, equally propitious to the studies of POPE in this early part of his life, that he inherited a fortune that was a decent competence, and sufficient to supply the small expenses, which, both by constitution and reflection, he required. He had no occasion to distract his thoughts by being solicitous, "de lodice paranda;" he needed not to wait,

—Pour diner, le succes d'un sonnet.*

His father retired from business, at the Revolution, to a little covenient box at Binfield, near Oakingham, in Berkshire; and having converted his effects into money, is said to have brought with him into the country almost twenty thousand pounds. As he was a Papist, he could not purchase, nor put his money to interest on real security; and as he adhered to the interests of King James, he made a point of conscience not to lend it to the new government;

For right hereditary tax'd and fin'd,
He stuck to poverty with peace of mind:

he

* Boileau, Art. Poet. c. 4.

he therefore kept this sum in his chest, and lived upon the principal, till by that time his son came to the succession, a great part of it was consumed. There was, however, enough left to supply the occasions of our author,* and to keep him from the two most destructive enemies to a young genius, want and dependence. "I can easily conceive, (says a late moralist,) that a mind occupied and overwhelmed with the weight and immensity of its own conceptions, *glancing* with astonishing rapidity *from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven*, cannot willingly submit to the dull drudgery of examining the justness and accuracy of a butcher's bill. To descend from the widest and comprehensive views of nature,

* He afterwards acquired a considerable fortune by his translation of the Iliad, which was published for his own benefit, by a subscription so large, that it does honour to this Kingdom. Mr. Warburton informs us, that he sold it to Lintot, the bookseller, on the following terms: twelve hundred pounds paid down, and all the books for his subscribers. The Odyssey was published in the same manner, and sold on the same conditions, except only, that instead of twelve, he had but six hundred pounds. He was assisted in this latter work by Brome and Fenton, to the first of whom he gave six hundred pounds, and to the latter three hundred. This translation has proved a good estate to the bookseller.

ture, and weigh out hops for a brewing, must be invincibly disgusting to a true genius; to be able to build imaginary palaces of the most exquisite architecture, but yet not to pay a carpenter's bill, is a cutting mortification and disgrace.

On the other hand, opulence, and high station, would be equally pernicious and unfavourable to a young genius; as they would almost unavoidably embarrass and immerse him in the cares, the pleasures, the indolence, and the dissipation, that accompany abundance. And, perhaps, the fortune most truly desirable, and the situation most precisely proper for a young poet, are marked out in that celebrated saying of Charles the Ninth of France, "Equi et poetæ ALENDI sunt, non SAGINANDI." — Poets and horses are to be *fed*, and not *fattened*.

The ESSAY ON CRITICISM, which occasioned the introduction of these reflections, was first, I am well informed, written in prose, according to

* The Adventurer, No. 50.

to the precept of Vida, and the practice of Racine.*

Quinetiam, prius effigiem formare, SOLUTIS,
Totiusque operis simulacrum fingere, verbis,
Proderit; atque omnes ex ordine nectere partes,
Et seriem rerum, et certos sibi ponere fines,
Per quos tuta regens vestigia tendere pergas.†

When Racine had fixed on a subject for a play, he wrote down in plain prose, not only the subject of each of the five acts, but of every scene, and every speech; so that he could take a view of the whole at once, and see whether every part cohered, and co-operated to produce the intended event: when his matter was thus regularly disposed, he was used to say, "My Tragedy is finished."

I now

* The younger Racine, in the life of his father, informs us, that he used to say, he dared not touch any of the subjects which Sophocles had handled, and abstained from imitating them from his great veneration of the original. And that this was the reason why he rather imitated Euripides than Sophocles; as in the Phædra, Andromache, Iphigenia.

† Poetic. lib. i. ver. 75.

I now propose to make some observations on, and illustrations of, such passages and precepts in this ESSAY, as, on account of their utility, novelty, or elegance, deserve particular attention; and, perhaps, I may take the freedom to hint at a few imperfections in this SENSIBLE performance. I shall cite the passages in the natural order in which they successively occur.

1. In poets as true genius is but rare.*

It is, indeed, so extremely rare, that no country in the succession of many ages, has produced above three or four persons that deserve the title. The "man of rhymes" may be easily found; but the genuine poet, of a lively plastic imagination, the true MAKER or CREATOR, is so uncommon a prodigy, that one is almost tempted to subscribe to the opinion of Sir William Temple, where he says, "That of all the numbers of mankind that live within the compass of a thousand years, for one man that is born capable of making

* Ver. 11.

making a great poet, there may be a thousand born capable of making as great generals, or ministers of state, as the most renowned in story."* There are, indeed, more causes required to concur to the formation of the former, than of the latter, which necessarily render its production more difficult.

2. True taste as seldom is the critic's share.†

La Bruyere says very sensibly, "I will allow the good writers are scarce enough; but then, I ask, where are the people that know how to read?"

3. Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.‡

It is somewhere remarked by Dryden, I think, that none but a poet is qualified to judge of a poet. The maxim is, however, contradicted by experience. Aristotle is said, indeed, to have written one ode; but neither Bossu nor Hurd are poets. The penetrating author of the Reflections

* Miscell. Essay iv. part. 2. † Ver. 12. ‡ Ver. 15.

tions on Poetry, Painting, and Music, will for ever be read with delight, and with profit, by all ingenious artists; "Nevertheless, (says Voltaire,) he did not understand music, could never make verses, and was not possessed of a single picture; but he had read, seen, heard, and reflected a great deal."* And Lord Shaftesbury speaks with some indignation on this subject: "If a musician performs his part well in the hardest symphonies, he must necessarily know the notes, and understand the rules of harmony and music. But must a man, therefore, who has an ear, and has studied the rules of music, of necessity, have a voice or hand? Can no one possibly judge a *fiddle*, but who is himself a fiddler? Can no one judge a picture, but who is himself a layer of colours?"† Quintilian and Pliny, who speak of the works of the ancient painters and statuaries with so much taste and sentiment, handled not themselves either the pencil or the chissel, nor Longinus and Dionysius the harp. But although such as have actually

* Louis XIV. p. 354.

† Characteristics. Vol. 3. p. 190. Edit. 12mo.

tually performed nothing in the art itself, may not, on that account, be totally disqualified to judge with accuracy of any piece of workmanship, yet, perhaps, a judgment will come with more authority and force from an artist himself. Hence the connoisseurs highly prize the treatise of Rubens concerning the imitation of antique statues, the Art of Painting by Leonardo da Vinci, and the Lives of the Painters by Vasari. As for the same reasons, Rameau's Dissertation on the thorough Bass, and the Introduction to a good Taste in Music, by the excellent, but neglected, Geminiani, demand a particular regard. The prefaces of Dryden would be equally valuable, if he did not so frequently contradict himself, and advance opinions diametrically opposite to each other. Some of Corneille's discourses on his own tragedies are admirably just. And one of the best pieces of modern criticism, the academy's observations on the Cid, was, we know, the work of persons who had themselves written well. And our author's own excellent preface * to his translation of the Iliad, one

* Yet our author was not satisfied with this preface: he used to say it was too pompous and poetical; too much on *the great*

one of the best pieces of prose in the English language, is an example how well poets are qualified to be critics.

4. Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass;
Those half-learn'd witlings, numerous in our isle,
As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile;
Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
Their generation's so equivocal.*

These lines, and those preceding and following them, are excellently satirical; and were, I think, the first we find in his works, that give an indication of that species of poetry to which his talent was most powerfully bent, and in which, though not as we shall see in others, he excelled all mankind.* The simile of the mule heightens

great horse, was his expression; and preferred his postscript to the Odyssey; and often talked of the excellence of Dryden's prose style.

* Ver. 38.

† Atterbury and Bolingbroke had the very same opinion of the bent and turn of our author's genius. The former, on reading the famous character of Addison, wrote thus to his friend: Let. 12. "Since you now, therefore, know where your

heightens the satire, and is new; as is the application of the insects of the Nile. POPE never shines so brightly as when he is proscribing bad authors.

5. — In the soul while MEMORY prevails,
The solid pow'r of UNDERSTANDING fails:
Where beams of bright IMAGINATION play,
The MEMORY'S soft figures melt away.*

I hardly believe there is in any language, a metaphor more appositely applied, or more elegantly expressed, than this of the effects of the warmth of fancy. Locke, who has embellished his dry subject with a variety of pleasing similitudes and allusions, has a passage, relating to the retentiveness of the memory, so very like this before us, and so happily worded, that I cannot forbear giving the reader the pleasure of

your real strength lies, I hope you will not suffer that talent to lie unemployed." And Bolingbroke, speaking of his didactic works, says to Swift, Let. 44, 1729, "This flatters my judgment; who always thought that, universal as his talents are, *This* is *eminently* and *peculiarly His*, above all writers I know, living or dead: I do not except Horace."

* Ver. 56.

comparing them together; only premising, that these two passages are patterns of the manner in which the metaphor should be used, and of the method of preserving it unmixed with any other idea, and not continuing it too far. "Our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching; where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away. How much the constitution of our bodies are concerned in this, and whether the temper of the brain makes this difference, that in some, it retains the characters drawn on it like marble, in others like freestone, and in others little better than sand, I shall not here enquire; though it may seem probable, that the constitution of the body does sometimes influence the memory; since we sometimes find a disease quite strip the mind of all its ideas; and the flames of a fever, in a few days, CALCINE all those images to dust and confusion, which seemed to be as lasting as if graved in marble."*

With

* Essay concerning Human Understanding, ch. x. sect. 5.

With respect to the truth of this observation of POPE, experience abundantly evinceth, that the three great faculties of the soul here spoken of, are seldom found united in the same person. There have yet existed but a few transcendent geniuses, who have been singularly blest with this rare assemblage of different talents. All that I can at present recollect, who have at once enjoyed, in full vigor, a sublime and splendid imagination, a solid and profound understanding, an exact and tenacious memory, are Herodotus, Plato, Tully, Livy, Tacitus, Galilæo, Bacon, Des Cartes, Malebranche, Milton, Burnet of the Charter-house, Berkeley, and Montesquieu. Bacon, in his Novum Organum, divides the human genius into two sorts: "Men of dry distinct heads, cool imaginations, and keen application; they easily apprehend the differences of things, are masters in controversy, and excel in confutation; and these are the most common. The second sort of men, of warm fancies, elevated thought, and wide knowledge; they instantly perceive the resemblances of things, and are poets or masters in science, invent arts, and strike out new light wherever they carry their

views."* This general observation has in it all that acuteness, comprehension and knowledge of man, which so eminently distinguished this philosopher.

> 6. One science only will one genius fit;
> So vast is art, so narrow human wit.
> Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
> But oft in those confin'd to single parts.†

When Tully attempted poetry, he became as ridiculous as Bolingbroke when he attempted philosophy and divinity. We look in vain for that genius which produced the Dissertation on Parties, in the tedious philosophical works; of which it is no exaggerated satire to say, that the reasoning of them is sophistical and inconclusive, the style diffuse and verbose, and the learning seemingly contained in them not drawn from the originals, but picked up and purloined from French critics and translations; and particularly from Bayle, from Rapin, and Thomassin, (as perhaps may be one day minutely shewn,) together with the assistances which our Cudworth and

* Page 40. † Ver. 60.

and Stanley happily afforded a writer confessedly ignorant of the Greek tongue, who has yet the insufferable * arrogance to vilify and censure, and to think he can confute, the best writers in that best language.

* I cannot forbear subjoining a passage of an excellent writer, and accomplished scholar, which is so very apposite to the present purpose, that one would think the author had Bolingbroke in his eye, if his valuable work had not been published before the world was blessed with the First Philosophy. "He who pretends to discuss the sentiments of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, or any one of the ancient philosophers, or even to cite and translate him, (except in trite and obvious sentiments,) without accurately knowing the Greek tongue in general; the nice differences of many words, apparently synonymous; the peculiar style of the author whom he presumes to handle; the new-coined words, and new significations given to old words, used by such author and his sect, the whole philosophy of such sect; together with the connections and dependencies of its several parts, whether logical, ethical, or physical; he, I say, that, without this previous preparation, attempts what I have said, will shoot in the dark; will be liable to perpetual *blunders*; will *explain*, and *praise*, and *censure*, merely by *chance*; and though HE MAY POSSIBLY TO FOOLS APPEAR AS A WISE MAN, WILL CERTAINLY AMONG THE WISE EVER PASS FOR A FOOL. Such a man's intellect comprehends ancient philosophy, as his eye comprehends a distant prospect. He may see, perhaps, enough to know mountains from plains, and seas from woods; but for an accurate discernment of particulars, and their character, this, without farther helps, 'tis impossible he should attain." HERMES, by HARRIS: Book ii. chap iii. p. 270.

When Fontaine (whose tales indicated a truly comic genius) brought a comedy on the stage, it was received with a contempt equally unexpected and deserved. Terence has left us no tragedy; and the Mourning Bride of Congreve, notwithstanding the praises bestowed on it by POPE in the Dunciad,* is certainly a despicable performance; the plot is unnaturally intricate, and overcharged with incidents; the sentiments trite, and the language turgid and bombast. Heemskirk and Teniers could not succeed in a serious and sublime subject of history-painting. The latter, it is well known, designed cartoons for tapestry, representing the history of the Turriani of Lombardy. Both the composition and the expression are extremely indifferent; and certain nicer virtuosi have remarked, that in the serious pieces of Titian himself, even in one of his Last Suppers, a circumstance of the Ridiculous and the Familiar is introduced, which suits not with the dignity of his subject. Hogarth's picture of Richard III. is pure, and unmixed with any dissimilar and degrading circumstances, and

* B. iii. v. 310. In the notes.

and strongly impresses terror and amazement. The modesty and good sense of the ancients is, in this particular, as in others, remarkable. The same writer never presumed to undertake more than one kind of dramatic poetry, if we except the CYCLOPS of Euripides. A poet never presumed to plead in public, or to write history, or, indeed, any considerable work in prose. The same actors never recited tragedy and comedy: this was observed long ago by Plato, in the third book of his REPUBLIC. They seem to have held that diversity, nay, universality, of excellence, at which the moderns frequently aim, to be a gift unattainable by man. We, therefore, of Great Britain, have, perhaps, more reason to congratulate ourselves on two very singular phenomena; I mean Shakespeare's being able to pourtray characters so very different as FALSTAFF and MACBETH; and Garrick's being able to personate so inimitably a LEAR or an ABEL DRUGGER. Nothing can more fully demonstrate the extent and versatility of these two original geniuses. Corneille, whom the French are so fond of opposing to Shakespeare, produced very contemptible comedies; and the

PLAIDEURES of Racine is so close a resemblance of Aristophanes, that it ought not to be here urged. The most universal of authors seems to be Voltaire, who has written almost equally well both in prose and verse; and whom either the tragedies of MEROPE and MAHOMET, or the History of LOUIS XIV. or CHARLES XII. would alone have immortalized.

7. Those rules of old, discover'd, not devis'd,
Are nature still, but nature methodiz'd:
Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.*

The precepts of the art of poesy were posterior to practice; the rules of the Epopea were all drawn from the Iliad and the Odyssey; and of Tragedy, from the ŒDIPUS of Sophocles. A petulant rejection, and an implicit veneration, of the rules of the ancient critics, are equally destructive of true taste. "It ought to be the first endeavour of a writer (says the excellent RAMBLER†) to distinguish nature from custom; or that which is established, because it is right, from

* Ver. 88. † No. 156.

from that which is right, only because it is established; that he may neither violate essential principles, by a desire of novelty, nor debar himself from the attainment of any beauties within his view, by a needless fear of breaking rules, where no literary dictator had authority to prescribe."

This liberal and manly censure of critical bigotry, extends not to those fundamental and indispensable rules which nature and necessity dictate, and demand to be observed; such, for instance, as in the higher kinds of poetry, that the action of the epopea be one, great, and entire; that the hero be eminently distinguished, move our concern, and deeply interest us; that the episodes arise easily out of the main fable; that the action commence as near the catastrophe as possible: and, in the drama, that no more events be crowded together, than can be justly supposed to happen during the time of representation, or to be transacted on one individual spot, and the like. But the absurdity here animadverted on, is the scrupulous nicety of those who bind themselves to obey frivolous and unimportant

tant laws; such as, that an epic poem should consist not of less than twelve books; that it should end fortunately; that in the first book there should be no simile; that the exordium should be very simple, and unadorned: that in a tragedy, only three personages should appear at once upon the stage; and that every tragedy should consist of five acts; by the rigid observation of which last unnecessary precept, the poet is deprived of using many a moving story, that would furnish matter enough for three, perhaps, but not for five acts; with other rules of the like indifferent nature. For the rest, as Voltaire observes,* whether the action of an epopea be simple or complex, completed in a month or in a year, or a longer time; whether the scene be fixed on one spot, as in the Iliad; or that the hero voyages from sea to sea, as in the Odyssey; whether he be furious, like Achilles, or pious, like Eneas; whether the action pass on land or sea; on the coast of Africa, as in the Luziada of Camoens; in America, as in the Araucana of Alonzo D'Ercilla; in heaven, in hell, beyond the limits

* Essay sur la Poesie Epique, pag. 339. tom. i.

mits of our world, as in the Paradise Lost; all these circumstances are of no consequence: the poem will be for ever an Epic poem, an Heroic poem; at least, till another new title be found proportioned to its merit. "If you scruple (says Addison) to give the title of an Epic poem to the Paradise Lost of Milton, call it, if you choose, a DIVINE poem: give it whatever name you please, provided you confess, that it is a work as admirable in its kind as the Iliad."

8. Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress and when indulge our flights.*

In the second part of Shaftesbury's ADVICE to an Author, is a judicious and elegant account of the rise and progress of arts and sciences in ancient Greece; to subjects of which sort, it were to be wished this author had always confined himself, as he indisputably understood them well, rather than have blemished and belied his patriotism, by writing against the religion of his country. I shall give the reader a passage that relates to the origin of criticism, which is curious

* Ver. 92.

and just. "When the persuasive arts, which were necessary to be cultivated among a people that were to be convinced before they acted, were grown thus in repute, and the power of moving the affections become the study and emulation of the forward wits and aspiring geniuses of the times, it would necessarily happen, that many geniuses of equal size and strength, though less covetous of public applause, of power, or of influence over mankind, would content themselves with the contemplation merely of these enchanting arts. These they would the better enjoy, the more they refined their taste, and cultivated their ear. Hence was the origin of CRITICS; who, as arts and sciences advanced, would necessarily come withal into repute; and being heard with satisfaction in their turn, were at length tempted to become authors, and appear in public. These were honoured with the name of Sophists; a character which in early times was highly respected. Nor did the gravest philosophers, who were censors of manners, and critics of a higher degree, disdain to exert their criticism on the inferior arts; especially in those relating to speech, and the power of argument and persuasion.

persuasion. When such a race as this was once risen, 'twas no longer possible to impose on mankind, by what was specious and pretending. The public would be paid in no false wit, or jingling eloquence. Where the learned critics were so well received, and philosophers themselves disdained not to be of the number, there could not fail to arise critics of an inferior order, who would subdivide the several provinces of this empire."*

9. Know well each Ancient's proper character;
His fable, subject, scope, in every page;
Religion, country, genius of his age.†

From their inattention to these particulars, many critics, and particularly the French, have been guilty of great absurdities. When Perrault impotently attempted to ridicule the first stanza of the first Olympic of Pindar, he was ignorant that the poet, in beginning with the praises of WATER,‡ alluded to the philosophy of Thales, who taught that water was the principle of all things; and which philosophy, Empedocles, the Sicilian,

* Characteristics, vol. I. 12mo. pag. 163. † Ver. 119.

‡ Αριστον μεν ΥΔΩΡ.

Sicilian, a cotemporary of Pindar, and a subject of Hiero, to whom Pindar wrote, had adopted in his beautiful poem. Homer, and the Greek tragedians, have been likewise censured: the former for protracting the Iliad after the death of Hector; and the latter, for continuing the AJAX and PHOENISSÆ, after the deaths of their respective heroes. But the censurers did not consider the importance of burial among the ancients; and that the action of the Iliad would have been imperfect without a description of the funeral rites of Hector and Patroclus; as the two tragedies, without those of Polynices and Eteocles: for the ancients esteemed a deprivation of sepulture to be a more severe calamity than death itself. It is observable, that this circumstance did not occur to POPE,* when he endeavoured to justify this conduct of Homer, by only saying, that, as the anger of Achilles does not die with Hector, but persecutes his very remains, the poet still keeps up to his subject, by describing the many effects of his anger, 'till it is fully satisfied; and that for this reason, the two last books

* Iliad xxiii. Note 1.

books of the Iliad may be thought not to be excrescences, but essential to the poem. I will only add, that I do not know an author whose capital excellence suffers more from the reader's not regarding his climate and country, than the incomparable Cervantes. There is a striking propriety in the madness of Don Quixote, not frequently taken notice of; for Thuanus informs us, that MADNESS is a common disorder among the Spaniards at the latter part of life, about the age of which the knight is represented. "Sur la fin de ses jours Mendozza devint furieux, comme sont d' ordinaire les Espagnols."*

10. Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse,
And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.†

Although, perhaps, it may seem impossible to produce any new observations on Homer and Virgil, after so many volumes of criticism as have been spent upon them, yet the following remarks have a novelty and penetration in them that

* Perroniana et Thuana, a Cologne, 1695, pag. 431.

† Ver. 128.

that may entertain; especially, as the little treatise from which they are taken is extremely scarce.

" Quæ variæ inter se notæ atque imagines animorum, a principibus utriusque populi poetis, Homero et Virgilio, mirificè exprimuntur. Siquidem Homeri duces et reges rapacitate, libidine, atque anilibus questibus, lacrymisque puerilibus, Græcam levitatem et inconstantiam referunt. Virgiliani vero principes, ab eximio poeta, qui Romanæ severitatis fastidium, et Latinum supercilium verebatur, et ad heroum populum loquebatur, ita componuntur ad majestatem consularem, ut quamvis ab Asiatica mollitie luxuque venerint, inter Furios atque Claudios nati educatique videantur. Neque suam, ullo actu, Æneas originem prodidisset, nisi, a præfactiore aliquanto pietate, fudisset crebro copiam lacrymarum.—Qua meliorem expressione morum hac ætate, non modo Virgilius Latinorum poetarum princeps, sed quivis inflatissimus vernaculorum, Homero præfertur: cum hic animos proceribus indurit suos, ille vero alienos.—Quamobrem varietas morum, qui carmine reddebantur, et hominum ad quos ea dirigebantur, inter Latinam Græcamque poesin, non inventionis tantum attulit, sed et elocutionis

tionis discrimen illud, quod præcipue inter Homerum et Virgilium deprehenditur; cum sententias et ornamenta quæ Homerus sparserat, Virgilius, Romanorum arium causa, contraxerit; atque ad mores et ingenia retulerit eorum, qui a poesi non petebant publicam aut privatam institutionem, quam ipsi Marte suo invenerant; sed tantum delectationem."* Blackwell, in his excellent Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, has taken many observations from this valuable book, particularly in his twelfth Section.

Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness, as well as care.
Music resembles poetry; in each
Are nameless graces, which no methods teach,
And which a master-hand alone can reach.†

POPE in this passage seems to have remembered one of the essays of Bacon, of which he is known to have been remarkably fond. "There is no excellent beauty, that hath not some strange-

* J. Vincentii Gravinæ de Poesi, ad S. Maffeium Epist. Added to his treatise entitled, Della Ragion Poetica. In Napoli. 1716. pag. 239, 250.

† Ver. 141

ness in the proportion. A man cannot tell whether Apelles or Albert Durer were the more trifler: whereof the one would make a personage by geometrical proportions; the other, by taking the best parts out of divers faces, to make one excellent. Such personages, I think, would please nobody, but the painter that made them. Not but I think, a painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it by a kind of felicity, as a musician that maketh an excellent ayre in music, and not by rule. A man shall see faces, that, if you examine them, part by part, you shall find never a good one; and yet altogether doe well."*

12. Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
Which, without passing thro' the judgment, gains
The heart, and all its ends at once obtains.†

Here

* Essay xliii. On Beauty.

† Ver. 150. These lines were thus printed in Dr. Warburton's quarto edition, 1743, page 16; and again in the octavo edition made use of in this work, 1752.

Here is evidently a blameable mixture of metaphors, where the attributes of the horse and the writer are confounded. The former may justly be said to "take a nearer way, and to deviate from a track;" but how can a *horse* "snatch a grace," or "gain the heart?"

13. Some figures monstrous and mishap'd appear,
Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,
Which, but proportion'd to their light, or place,
Due distance reconciles to form and grace.*

By this excellent observation, delivered in a beautiful metaphor, all the faults imputed to Homer may be justified. Those who censure what is called the GROSSNESS of some of his images, may please to attend to the following remark of a writer, by no means prejudiced in favour of the ancients. "Quant a ce qu'on appelle GROSSIERETE dans les héros d'Homére, on peut rire tant qu'on voudra de voir Patrocle, au neuviéme livre de l'Iliade, mettre trois gigots de mouton dans une marmite, allumer et souffler le feu, et préparer le diner avec Achille: Achille et Patrocle

* Ver. 171.

n'en sont pas moins éclatans. Charles XII. Roi de Suéde, a fait six mois sa cuisine a Demir-Tocca, sans perdre rien de son heroisme; et la plûpart de nos generaux qui portent dans une campe tout le luxe d'une cour effeminée, auront bien de la pein a egaler ces heros, qui faisoient leur cuisine eux-memes.——En un mot, Homere avoit a representer un Ajax et un Hector; non un courtisan de Versailles, ou de Saint James."*

14. A prudent chief not always must display
His pow'rs in equal rank, and fair array.†

The same may be said of music: concerning which, a discerning judge has lately made the following observation. "I do not mean to affirm, that in this extensive work (of Marcello) every recitative, air, or chorus, is of equal excellence. A continued elevation of this kind no author ever came up to. Nay, if we consider that variety, which in all arts is necessary to keep up attention, we may, perhaps, affirm, with truth, that

* Voltaire, Essay sur la Poesie Epique. Les Oeuvres, Tom. ii. pag. 354, 355. This Essay is very different from what formerly appeared in England.

† Ver. 175.

that INEQUALITY makes a part of the character of excellence; that something ought to be thrown into shades, in order to make the lights more striking. And, in this respect, Marcello is truly excellent: if ever he seems to FALL, it is only to RISE with more astonishing majesty and greatness."* It may be pertinent to subjoin Roscommon's remark on the same subject.

——————Far the greatest part
Of what some call neglect, is study'd art.
When Virgil seems to trifle in a line,
'Tis but a warning-piece, which gives the sign
To wake your fancy, and prepare your sight
To reach the noble height of some unusual flight.†

15. Hail bards triumphant born in happier days.‡

Doctor Warburton is of opinion, that "there is a *pleasantry* in this title, which alludes to the state of WARFARE that all true genius must undergo while here on earth." Is not this interpretation of the word *triumphant* very far-fetched, and foreign to the author's meaning? who, I

 conceive,

* Avison's Essay on Musical Expression, edit. ii. page 103.

† Essay on Transl. Verse. ‡ Ver. 189.

conceive, used the word to denote merely the TRIUMPH which arose from *superiority.*

16. The last, the meanest of your sons inspire.*

"This word *last,*" (says the same commentator,) "spoken in his early youth, as it were by chance, seems to have been OMINOUS." I am not persuaded that all true genius died with POPE: for one would be tempted to think, that the Seasons of Thomson, the Leonidas of Glover, the Pleasures of Imagination and the Odes of Akenside, the Night-Thoughts of Young, the Elegy of Gray, and Ode on Eton College, the truly pathetic Monody on Lady Lyttelton, together with many Pieces in Dodsley's Miscellanies, were not published when Dr. Warburton delivered this insinuation of a failure of poetical abilities.

17. So pleas'd at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky;
Th' eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
But, those attain'd, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way;

Th'

* Ver. 196.

Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes;
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise.*

This comparison is frequently mentioned as an instance of the strength of fancy. The images, however, appear too general and indistinct, and the last line conveys no new idea to the mind. The following picture in Shaftesbury, on the same sort of subject, appears to be more full and striking. "Beneath the mountain's foot, the rocky country rises into hills, a proper basis of the ponderous mass above; where huge embodied rocks lie piled on one another, and seem to prop the high arch of heaven. See! with what trembling steps poor mankind tread the narrow brink of the deep precipices! From whence with giddy horror they look down, mistrusting even the ground that bears them; whilst they hear the hollow sound of torrents underneath, and see the ruin of the impending rock; with falling trees, which hang with their roots upwards, and seem to draw more ruin after them."† See the picturesque description of An-

* Ver. 225.

† The Moralists. Characteristics, vol. ii. page 253.

nibal passing the Alps, in Livy, who is a great poet.

15. A perfect judge will read each work of wit
With the same spirit that it's author writ.*

"To be able to judge of poetry, (says Voltaire,) a man must feel strongly, must be born with some sparks of that fire which animates the poet whom he criticises. As in deciding upon the merit of a piece of music, it is not enough, it is, indeed, nothing, to calculate the proportion of sounds as a mathematician, but we must have an ear and a soul for music."†

19. Thus when we view some well proportion'd dome,
(The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome!)
No single parts unequally surprise,
All comes united to th' admiring eyes;
No monstrous height, or breadth, or length, appear;
The whole at once is bold and regular.‡

This is justly and elegantly expressed; and though it may seem difficult to speak of the same

* Ver. 233. † Ubi supra, page 361.

‡ Ver. 247.

same subject after such a description, yet Akenside has ventured, and nobly succeeded.

> Mark, how the dread PANTHEON stands
> Amid the domes of modern hands!
> Amid the toys of idle state,
> How simply, how severely great!
> Then pause!* — — —

> 20. Once on a time, La Mancha's knight, they say,
> A certain bard encount'ring on the way.†———

By this short tale, POPE has shewed us how much he could have excelled in telling a story of humour. The incident is taken from the second part of Don Quixote, first written by Don Alonzo Fernandez de Avellanada, and afterwards translated, or rather imitated, and new-modelled, by no less an author than the celebrated Le Sage.‡ The

* Ode to L. Huntingdon. † Ver. 267.

‡ Le Sage generally took his plans from the Spanish writers, the manners of which nation he has well imitated. Le Diable Boiteux was drawn from the Diabolo Cojuelo of Guevara; his Gil Blas, from Don Gusman D'Alfarache. Le Sage made a journey into Spain to acquaint himself with the Spanish customs. He is a natural writer, of true humour. He died in a little house near Paris, where he supported himself by writing, 1747. He had been deaf ten years.

The book is not so contemptible as some authors insinuate; it was well received in France, and abounds in many strokes of humour and character worthy Cervantes himself. The brevity to which POPE's narration was confined, would not permit him to insert the following humorous dialogue at length. "I am satisfied you'll compass your design, (said the scholar,) provided you omit the combat in the lists. Let him have a care of that, (said Don Quixote, interrupting him;) that is the best part of the plot. But, Sir, (quoth the Bachelor,) if you would have me adhere to Aristotle's rules, I must omit the combat. Aristotle, (replied the Knight,) I grant, was a man of some parts; but his capacity was not unbounded: and give me leave to tell you, his authority does not extend over combats in the list, which are far above his narrow rules. Would you suffer the chaste queen of Bohemia to perish? For how can you clear her innocence? Believe me, COMBAT is the most honourable method you can pursue; and, besides, it will add such grace to your play, that all the rules in the universe must not stand in competition with it. Well, Sir Knight, (replied the Bachelor,) for your sake, and for the

honour of chivalry, I will not leave out the combat: and that it may appear the more glorious, all the court of Bohemia shall be present at it, from the princes of the blood, to the very footmen. But still one difficulty remains, which is, that our common theatres are not large enough for it. There must be one erected on purpose, (answered the Knight;) and, in a word, rather than leave out the combat, the play had better be acted in a field or plain.*

21. Some to *conceit* alone their taste confine,
And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at every line.†

Simplicity, with elegance and propriety,‡ is the perfection of style in every composition. Let us, on this occasion, compare two passages from Theocritus and Ovid upon the same subject. The Cyclops, in the former, addresses Galatea with comparisons, natural, obvious, and drawn from his situation.

Ω λευκα

* Continuation of Hist. of Don Quixote, b. iii. ch. 10.

† Ver. 289.

‡ Λεξεως δε αρετη, σαφη και μη ταπεινην ειναι. Aristot. Poet. c. 22.

Ω λευκα Γαλαΐεια, τι τον φιλεοντ' ἀποβάλλη;
Λευκοΐερα ταυρίας τωΐδειν, απαλωΐερα δ' ἀρνῶ,
Μοσχω γαυρόΐερα, φιαρωΐερα ομφακῶ ωμας.*

These simple and pastoral images were the most proper that could occur to a Cyclops, and to an inhabitant of Sicily. Ovid could not restrain the luxuriancy of his genius, on the same occasion, from wandering into an endless variety of flowery and unappropriated similitudes, and equally applicable to any other person or place.

Candidior nivei folio, Galatea, ligustri;
Floridior pratis; longâ procerior alno;
Splendidior vitro; tenero lascivior hædo;
Lævior assiduo detritis æquore conchis;
Solibus hybernis, æstivâ gratior umbrâ;
Nobilior pomis; platano conspectior altâ;
Lucidior glacie; maturâ dulcior uvâ;
Mollior et cygni plumis, et lacte coacto;
Et, si non fugias, riguo formosior horto.†

There are seven more lines of comparison.

22. False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
Its gaudy colours spreads on every place;
The face of nature we, no more survey,
All glares alike without distinction gay.‡

The

* Idyll. Κυκλ. † Metam. xiii. 789. ‡ Ver. 311.

The nauseous affectation of expressing every thing pompously and poetically, is no where more visible than in a poem lately published, entitled AMYNTOR and THEODORA. The following instance may be alleged among many others. Amyntor having a pathetic tale to discover, being choaked with sorrow, and at a loss for utterance, uses these ornamental and unnatural images:

——— ——— ——— ——— O could I steal
From Harmony her softest warbled strain
Of melting air! or Zephyre's vernal voice!
Or Philomela's song, when love dissolves
To liquid blandishment his evening lay,
All nature smiling round.*

Voltaire has given a comprehensive rule with respect to every species of composition: "Il ne faut rechercher, ni les pensées, ni les tours, ni les expressions, et que l'art, dans tous les grands ouvrages, est de bien raisonner, sans trop faire d'argument; de bien peindre, sans vouloir tout peindre; d'émouvoir, sans vouloir toujours exciter les passions.†

23. Some

* Cant. 3. ver. 92.

† Oeuvres, tom. iii. page 332.

23. Some by old words to fame have made pretence.*

QUINTILIAN'S advice on this subject is as follows. "Cum sint autem verba propria, ficta, translata; propriis dignitatem dat antiquitas. Namque et sanctiorem, et magis admirabilem reddunt orationem, quibus non quilibet fuit usurus: eoque ornamento acerrimi judicii Virgilius unice est usus. *Olli* enim, et *quianam*, et *mis*, et *pone*, pellucent, et aspergunt illam, quæ etiam in picturis est gratissima, vetustatis inimitabilem arti auctoritatem. Sed utendum modo, nec ex ultimis tenebris repetenda."†

24. Where'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
In the next line it "whispers through the trees."‡

Trite and unvaried rhymes offend us; not only as they are destitute of the grace of novelty, but as they imply carelessness in the poet, who adopts what he finds ready made to his hands. We have not many compositions where NEW and uncommon rhymes are introduced. One or two writers,

* Ver. 324. † Inst. Orat. lib. vii. c. 3. ‡ Ver. 350.

writers, however, I cannot forbear mentioning, who have been studious of this beauty. They are Parnell; Pitt, in his Translation of Vida; West, in his Pindar; Thomson, in the Castle of Indolence; and the author of an elegant Ode TO SUMMER, published in a Miscellany entitled the UNION.*

25. A needless Alexandrine ends the song.†

Dryden was the first who introduced the frequent use of this measure into our English heroic; for we do not ever find it even in the longer works of Sandys, nor in Waller. Dryden has often used it very happily, and it gives a complete harmony to many of his triplets. By scrupulously avoiding it, POPE has fallen into an unpleasing and tiresome monotony in his Iliad.

25. And praise the easy vigour of a line,
Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join.‡

FENTON.

* Edinburgh, 1753, 12mo. p. 81. † Ver. 356.

‡ Ver. 360.

FENTON, in his entertaining observations on Waller, has given us a curious anecdote concerning the great industry and exactness with which Waller polished even his smallest compositions. "When the court was at Windsor, these verses * were writ in the Tasso of her Royal Highness, at Mr. Waller's request, by the late Duke of Buckinghamshire; and I very well remember to have heard his Grace say, that the author employed the GREATEST PART OF A SUMMER in composing and correcting them. So that, however he is generally reputed the parent of those swarms of insect wits who affect to be thought easy writers, it is evident that he bestowed much time and care on his poems, before he ventured them out of his hands."†

27. True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.‡

It is well known that the writings of Voiture, of Sarassin, and La Fontaine cost them much

* Only ten in number.

† Fenton's Waller, edit. 12mo. OBSERVATIONS, p. 148.

‡ Ver. 362.

much pains, and were laboured into that facility for which they are so famous, with repeated alterations, and many rasures. Moliere is reported to have past whole days in fixing upon a proper epithet or rhyme, although his verses have all the flow and freedom of conversation. This happy facility, said a man of wit, may be compared to garden-terraces, the expense of which does not appear; and which, after the cost of several millions, yet seem to be a mere work of chance and nature. I have been informed, that Addison was so extremely nice in polishing his prose compositions, that, when almost a whole impression of a Spectator was worked off, he would stop the press, to insert a new preposition or conjunction.

28. Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar:
When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labours, and the words move slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.*

* Ver. 366.

These lines are usually cited as fine examples of adapting the sound to the sense. But that POPE has failed in this endeavour, has been lately demonstrated by the RAMBLER. "The verse intended to represent the *whisper* of the *eternal breeze*, must surely be confessed not much to excel in softness or volubility; and the *smooth stream* runs with a perpetual clash of jarring consonants. The noise and turbulence of the *torrent* is, indeed, distinctly imaged; for it requires very little skill to make our language rough. But in the lines which mention the *effort of Ajax*, there is no particular heaviness or delay. The *swiftness of Camilla* is rather contrasted than exemplified. Why the verse should be lengthened to express speed, will not easily be discovered. In the dactyls, used for that purpose by the ancients, two short syllables were pronounced with such rapidity, as to be equal only to one long; they therefore naturally exhibit the act of passing through a long space in a short time. But the *Alexandrine*, by its pause in the midst, is a tardy and stately measure; and the word *unbending*, one of the most sluggish and slow which

our language affords, cannot much accelerate its motion."*

29. Be thou the first true merit to befriend;
His praise is lost who stays till all commend.†

When Thomson published his WINTER, 1726, it lay a long time neglected, till Mr. Spence made honourable mention of it in his Essay on the Odyssey; which becoming a popular book, made the poem universally known. Thomson always acknowledged the use of this recommendation; and from this circumstance, an intimacy commenced between the critic and the poet, which lasted till the lamented death of the latter, who was of a most amiable and benevolent temper.

30. And such as Chaucer is shall Dryden be.‡

Waller has an elegant copy of verses on the mutability of the English tongue, which bears a strong resemblance to this passage of POPE.

* No. 92. † Ver. 474. ‡ Ver. 483.

Poets that lasting marble seek,
Must carve in Latin or in Greek;
We write in sand; our language grows,
And like the tide, our work o'erflows.
Chaucer his SENSE can only boast,
The glory of his numbers lost!
Years have defac'd his matchless strain,
And yet HE DID NOT SING IN VAIN.*

To fix a language has been found, among the most able undertakers, to be a fruitless project. The style of the present French writers, of Crebillon, Helvetius, and Buffon, for instance, is visibly different from that of Boileau and Bossuet, notwithstanding the strict and seasonable injunctions of the Academy: and the diction even of such a writer as Maffei, is corrupted with many words, not to be found in Machiavel or Ariosto.

31. So when the faithful pencil has design'd
Some bright idea of the master's mind,
When a new world leaps out at his command,
And ready nature waits upon his hand;
When the ripe colours soften and unite,
And sweetly melt into just shade and light;

When

* Of ENGLISH VERSE. Fenton's edit. p. 147. 12mo.

When mellowing years their full perfection give,
And each bold figure just begins to live,
The treacherous colours the fair art betray,
And all the bright creation fades away.*

I have quoted these beautiful lines at length, as I believe nothing was ever more happily expressed on the art of painting; a subject of which POPE always speaks *con amore.* Of all poets whatever, Milton has spoken most feelingly of music, and POPE of painting. The reader may, however, compare the following passage of Dryden on the same subject;

More cannot be by mortal art express'd,
But venerable age shall add the rest:
For Time shall with his ready pencil stand,
Retouch your figures with his ripening hand;
Mellow your colours, and imbrown the tint,
Add every grace which Time alone can grant;
To future ages shall your fame convey,
And give more beauties than he takes away.†

If POPE has so much excelled in speaking in the properest terms of this art, it may, perhaps,

* Ver. 484. † Dryden to Kneller.

be ascribed to his having practised it;* the same may be said of Milton with respect to music. It may, perhaps, be wondered at, that a proficiency in these arts is not now frequently found in the same person. I cannot at present recollect any painters that were good poets; except Salvator Rosa, and Charles Vermander, of Mulbrac, in Flanders, whose comedies are much esteemed. But the satires of the former contain no strokes of that fervid and wild imagination so visible in his landscapes.

32. If wit so much from ign'rance undergo.†

The inconveniences that attend wit are well enumerated in this excellent passage. Poets, who imagine they are known and admired, are frequently mortified and humbled. Boileau going one day to receive his pension, and the treasurer reading these words in his order, "The pension we have granted to Boileau, on account of the satisfaction

* Lord Mansfield has in his possession a great curiosity; a head of Betterton, painted by Pope.

† Ver. 508.

satisfaction *his works* have given us," asked him of what kind were *his works:* "Of *Masonry,* (replied the poet;) I am a BUILDER." Racine always reckoned the praises of the ignorant among the chief sources of chagrin; and used to relate, that an old magistrate, who had never been at a play, was carried one day to his Andromaque. This magistrate was very attentive to the tragedy, to which was added the Plaideurs; and going out of the theatre, he said to the author, "I am extremely pleased, Sir, with your Andromaque; I am only amazed that it ends so *gaily;* J' avois d' abord eu quelque envie de pleurer, mais la vue des petits chiens m' a fait rire."

33. Now they who reach Parnassus' lofty crown,
Employ their pains to spurn some others down.*

If we can credit the reports of the arts used by Addison to suppress the rising merit of POPE, it must give us pain to reflect, to what mean artifices envy and malignity will compel a gentleman, and a genius, to descend. It is asserted

* Ver. 514.

that Addison discouraged POPE from inserting the machinery in the Rape of the Lock; that he privately insinuated, that POPE was a Tory and a Jacobite, and had a hand in writing the Examiners; that Addison himself translated the first book of Homer, published under Tickel's name; and that he secretly encouraged Gildon to abuse POPE in a virulent pamphlet, for which Addison paid Gildon ten guineas. This usage supposed, extorted from POPE the famous character of Atticus, which is perhaps one of the finest pieces of satire extant. It is said, that when Racine read his tragedy of Alexander to Corneille, the latter gave him many general commendations, but advised him to apply his genius, as not being adapted to the drama, to some other species of poetry. Corneille, one would hope, was incapable of a mean jealousy; and if he gave this advice, thought it really proper to be given.

34. When love was all an easy monarch's care;
Seldom at council, never in a war.*

The

* Ver. 536.

The dissolute reign of Charles II. justly deserved the satirical proscription in this passage. Under the notion of laughing at the absurd austerities of the Puritans, it became the mode to run into the contrary extreme, and to ridicule real religion and unaffected virtue. The king, during his exile, had seen and admired the splendor of the court of Louis XIV. and endeavoured to introduce the same luxury into the English court. The common opinion, that this was the Augustan age in England, is excessively false. A just taste was by no means yet formed. What was called SHEER WIT, was alone studied and applauded. Rochester, it is said, had no idea that there could be a better poet than Cowley. The king was perpetually quoting HUDIBRAS. The neglect of such a poem as the Paradise Lost, will for ever remain a monument of the bad taste that prevailed. It may be added, that the progress of philological learning, and of what is called the belles lettres, was, perhaps, obstructed by the institution of the Royal Society, which turned the thoughts of men of genius to physical enquiries. Our style in prose was but beginning to be polished; although the diction of Hobbes is sufficiently pure; which philosopher,

philosopher, and not the FLORID Spratt, was the classic of that age. If I was to name a time when the arts, and polite literature, were at their height in this nation, I should mention the latter end of King William, and the reign of Queen Anne.

35. With mean complacence ne'er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust.*

Our poet practised this excellent precept in his conduct towards Wycherley, whose pieces he corrected with equal freedom and judgment. But Wycherley, who had a bad heart, and an insufferable share of vanity, and who was one of the professed WITS of the last-mentioned age, was soon disgusted at this candour and ingenuity of POPE; insomuch, that he came to an open and ungenerous rupture with him.

36. Fear not the anger of the wise to raise;
Those best can bear reproof who merit praise.†

The freedom and unreservedness, with which Boileau and Racine communicated their works to each

* Ver. 580. † Ver. 582.

each other, is hardly to be paralleled: of which many amiable instances appear in their letters, lately published by the son of the latter: particularly in the following. " J'ai trouvé que la TROMPETTE & LES SOURDS etoient trop joues, & qu'il ne falloit point trop appuyer sur votre incommodité, moins encore chercher de l'esprit sur ce sujet." Boileau communicated to his friend the first sketch of his Ode on the Taking Namur. It is entertaining to contemplate a rude draught by such a master; and is no less pleasing to observe the temper with which he receives the objections of Racine.* " J'ai deja retouché à tout cela; mais je ne veux point l'achever que je n'aie reçu vos remarques, qui surément m' éclaireront encore l'esprit." The same volume informs us of a curious anecdote, that Boileau† generally made the second verse of a couplet before the first; that he declared it was one of the grand secrets of poetry, to give, by this means, a greater

* Pag. 197. See also pag. 245. 191.

† A strong argument *against rhyme* in general, might be drawn from this strange practice of even so correct a writer as Boileau.

greater energy and meaning to his verses; that he advised Racine to follow the same method; and said on this occasion, "I have taught him to rhyme with difficulty."

37. No place so sacred from such fops is barr'd,
Nor is Paul's church more safe than Paul's church-yard:
Nay, fly to altars, there they'll talk you dead;
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.*

This stroke of satire is literally taken from Boileau.

Gardez-vous d' imiter ce rimeur furieux,
Qui de ses vains écrits lecteur harmonieux
Aborde en récitant quiconque le salue,
Et poursuit de ses vers les passans dans le ruë,
Il n' est Temple si saint, des Anges respecté,
Qui soit contre sa muse un lieu du sûreté.†

Which lines allude to the impertinence of a French poet, called Du Perrier; who, finding Boileau one day at church, insisted upon repeating to him an ode during the elevation of the host; and desired his opinion, whether or no it was

* Ver. 622. † Art. Poet. Chant. iv.

was in the manner of Malherbe. Without this anecdote, the pleasantry of the satire would be overlooked. It may here be occasionally observed, how many beauties in this species of writing are lost, for want of knowing the facts to which they allude. The following passage may be produced as a proof. Boileau, in his excellent Epistle to his Gardener at Anteuil, says,

> Mon maître, dirois-tu, passe pour un Docteur,
> Et parle quelquefois mieux qu' un Prédicateur.*

It seems our † author and Racine returned one day in high spirits from Versailles, with two honest

* Epitre 11.

† The names of Racine, and Corneille, being often mentioned in this work, it will not be improper to add an ingenious parallel of their respective merits, written by Fontenelle.

I. Corneille had no excellent author before his eyes, whom he could follow: Racine had Corneille.

II. Corneille found the French stage in a barbarous state, and advanced it to great Perfection: Racine has not supported it in the perfection in which he found it.

III. The characters of Corneille are true, though they are not common: The characters of Racine are not true, but only in proportion as they are common.

IV.

nest citizens of Paris. As their conversation was full of gaiety and humour, the two citizens were greatly

IV. Sometimes the characters of Corneille are, in some respects, false and unnatural, because they are noble and singular: Those of Racine are often, in some respects, low, on account of their being natural and ordinary.

V. He that has a noble heart, would chuse to resemble the heroes of Corneille: He that has a little heart, is pleased to find his own resemblance in the heroes of Racine.

VI. We carry, from hearing the pieces of the One, a desire to be virtuous: And we carry the pleasure of finding men like ourselves in foibles and weaknesses, from the pieces of the Other.

VII. The Tender and the Graceful of Racine is sometimes to be found in Corneille: The Grand and Sublime of Corneille is never to be found in Racine.

VIII. Racine has painted only the French and the present age, even when he designed to paint another age, and other nations: We see in Corneille, all those ages, and all those nations, that he intended to paint.

IX. The number of the pieces of Corneille is much greater, than that of Racine: Corneille, notwithstanding, has made fewer tautologies and repetitions than Racine has made.

X. In the passages where the versification of Corneille is good, it is more bold, more noble, and, at the same time, as pure and as finished as that of Racine: but it is not preserved in this degree of beauty; and that of Racine is always equally supported.

XI.

greatly delighted: and one of them, at parting, stopt Boileau with this compliment; "I have travelled with Doctors of the Sorbonne, and even with Religious; but I never heard so many fine things said before; *en verite vous parlez cent fois mieux qu' un* PREDICATEUR."

It

XI. Authors inferior to Racine have written successfully after him, in his own way: No author, not even Racine himself, dared to attempt, after Corneille, that kind of writing which was peculiar to him.

This comparison, of the justness of which the reader is left to judge, is said greatly to have irritated Boileau, the invariable friend and defender of Racine. It may be remarked, that Boileau had mentioned Fontenelle with contempt, in a strange stanza that originally concluded his Ode to the King, at present omitted. These were the lines:

J' aime mieux, nouvel Icare,
Dans les airs cherchant Pindare,
Tomber du ciel le plus haut:
Que loué de Fontenelle,
Razer, craintive hirondelle,
La terre, comme Perault.

This ode was parodied in France; but not with such incomparable humour, as by our Prior, in England.

To these remarks of Fontenelle may be added what Voltaire says, with his usual vivacity and brevity: "Corneille alone formed himself; but Louis XIV. Colbert, Sophocles, and Euripides, all of them contributed to form Racine."

It is but justice to add, that the fourteen succeeding verses, in the poem before us, containing the character of a TRUE CRITIC, are superior to any thing in Boileau's Art of Poetry: from which, however, POPE has borrowed many observations.

38. The mighty STAGIRITE first left the shore,
Spread all his sails, and durst the deep explore;
He steer'd securely, and discover'd far,
Led by the light of the Mæonian star.*

A noble and just character of the first and the best of critics; and sufficient to repress the fashionable and nauseous petulance of several impertinent moderns, who have attempted to discredit this great and useful writer. Whoever surveys the variety and perfection of his productions, all delivered in the chastest style, in the clearest order, and the most pregnant brevity, is amazed at the immensity of his genius. His logic, however at present neglected for those redundant and verbose systems which took their rise from Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding,

* Ver. 645.

standing, is a mighty effort of the mind; in which are discovered the principal sources of the art of reasoning, and the dependencies of one thought on another; and where, by the different combinations he hath made of all the forms the understanding can assume in reasoning, which he hath traced for it, he hath so closely confined it, that it cannot depart from them, without arguing inconsequentially. His Physics contain many useful observations, particularly his History of Animals, which Buffon highly praises; to assist him in which, Alexander gave orders, that creatures of different climates and countries should, at a great expense, be brought to him, to pass under his inspection. His Morals are, perhaps, the purest system in antiquity. His Politics are a most valuable monument of the civil wisdom of the ancients; as they preserve to us the description of several governments, and particularly of Crete and Carthage, that otherwise would have been unknown. But of all his compositions, his Rhetoric and Poetics are most excellent. No writer has shewn a greater penetration into the recesses of the human heart than this philosopher, in the second book of his Rhe-

toric; where he treats of the different manners and passions that distinguish each different age and condition of man; and from whence Horace plainly took his famous description in the Art of Poetry.* La Bruyere, La Rochefoucault, and Montaigne himself, are not to be compared to him in this respect. No succeeding writer on eloquence, not even Tully, has added any thing new or important on this subject. His Poetics, which I suppose are here by POPE chiefly referred to, seem to have been written for the use of that prince, with whose education Aristotle was honoured, to give him a just taste in reading Homer and the tragedians; to judge properly of which, was then thought no unnecessary accomplishment in the character of a prince. To attempt to understand poetry, without having diligently digested this treatise, would be as absurd and impossible, as to pretend to a skill in geometry, without having studied Euclid. The fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, wherein he has pointed out the properest methods of exciting TERROR and PITY, convince us, that he was

* Ver. 157.

was intimately acquainted with those objects which most forcibly affect the heart. The prime excellence of this precious treatise is the scholastic precision, and philosophical closeness, with which the subject is handled, without any address to the passions, or imagination. It is to be lamented, that the part of the Poetics in which he had given precepts for comedy, did not likewise descend to posterity.

39. Horace still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense.*

The vulgar notion, that Horace's Epistle to the Pisos contains a complete Art of Poetry, is totally groundless; it being solely confined to the state and defects of the Roman drama. The transitions in the writings of Horace, are some of the most exquisite strokes of his art: many of them pass at present unobserved: and that his contemporaries were equally blind to this beauty, he himself complains, though with a seeming irony,

* Ver. 653.

Cum lamentamur non APPARERE labores
Nostros, et TENUI deducta poemata filo. *

It seems also to be another common mistake, that one of Horace's characteristics is the SUBLIME; of which, indeed, he has given a very few strokes, and those taken from Pindar, and, probably, from Alcæus.† His excellence lay in exquisite observations on human life, and in touching the foibles of mankind with delicacy and urbanity. 'Tis easy to perceive this moral ‡ turn in all

* Epist. I. ver. 224. lib. 2.

† "De Horatio quidem ita sentimus; si Græcorum Lyrica extarent, futurum, ut illius furta quamplurima deprehenderentur: qui tamen imitatores *servum pecus* appellare non dubitarit.——Ex Alcæo, ut opinor, [Horatii] multa, &c." *Scaliger. Poet. L. 5. c. 7.* This is also the opinion of Heyne. Disquisit. Æneid.

‡ It was this turn of mind, which, if I am not deceived, made Horace more fond of Euripides than of Sophocles; at least if we may judge from his more frequent allusions to the works of the former than of the latter. The dispute about the burying of Ajax, is almost the only passage of Sophocles alluded to in his works. Sat. iii. b. ii. 187. But to the works of Euripides there are many: such as the sacrifice of Iphigenia in the same epistle; the dialogue between Bacchus and Pentheus, at the end of 16 epis. of the 1st book; and the allusion to

all his compositions: the writer of the epistles is discerned in the odes. Elegance, not sublimity, was his grand characteristic. Horace is the most popular author of all antiquity; the reason is,

 because

to the quarrel of Zethus and Amphion, epis. 18. book i. In the Art of Poetry, the examples are chiefly taken from the pieces of Euripides;

Sit *Medea* ferox invictaque, flebilis *Ino*,
Perfidus *Ixion*, *Io* vaga, tristis *Orestes*.

And again,

Telephus et Peleus, &c.—and, Telephe, vel Peleu—

Perhaps he had his favourite Euripides in his head, when he mentioned a capital fault in the unravelling a just drama;

Nec Deus intersit, &c.——

for Euripides is frequently censured for his conduct in this particular.

Rem tibi Socraticæ poterunt ostendere chartæ,

is also a line that puts one in mind of the friend and companion whom Socrates is said even to have assisted in his plays. And if it were not too great a refinement, I would add, that this line,

Non satis est *pulchra* esse poemata *dulcia* sunto,

evidently points out the two known *characteristics* of the two great Tragedians, and gives the preference to his supposed favourite.

because he abounds in images drawn from familiar life, and in remarks, that "come home to mens business and bosoms." Hence he is more frequently quoted, and alluded to, than any poet of antiquity.

40. See Dionysius Homer's thoughts refine,
* And call new beauties forth from ev'ry line.*

These prosaic lines, this spiritless eulogy, are much below the merit of the critic whom they are intended to celebrate. Pope seems here rather to have considered Dionysius as the author only of reflections concerning Homer; and to have in some measure overlooked, or at least not to have sufficiently insisted on, his most excellent book, ΠΕΡΙ ΣΥΝΘΗΣΕΩΣ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΩΝ, in which he has unfolded all the secret arts that render composition harmonious. One part of this discourse, I mean from the beginning of the twenty-first to the end of the twenty-fourth Section, is, perhaps, one of the most useful pieces of criticism extant. He there discusses the three different species of composition; which he divides into

* Ver. 665.

into the NERVOUS and AUSTERE, the SMOOTH and FLORID, and the MIDDLE, which partakes of the nature of the two others. As examples of the first species, he mentions Antimachus and Empedocles in heroics, Pindar in lyric, Æschylus in tragic poetry, and Thucydides in history. As examples of the second, he produces Hesiod as a writer in heroics; Sappho, Anacreon, and Simonides, in lyric; Euripides ONLY, among tragic writers; among the historians, Ephorus, and Theopompus; and Isocrates, among the rhetoricians. All these, says he, have used words that are ΛΕΙΑ, και ΜΑΛΑΚΑ, και ΠΑΡΘΕΝΩΠΑ. The writers which he alleges as instances of the third species, who have happily blended the two other species of composition, and who are the most complete models of style, are Homer, in epic poetry; Stesichorus and Alcæus, in lyric; in tragic, Sophocles; in history, Herodotus; in eloquence, Demosthenes; in philosophy, Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle.*

* See also the elegant and useful treatise of Dionysius on the characters of all the principal orators, poets, and historians. Sylburgi edit. Lipsiæ. 1691. folio. page 68. vol. 2.

41. Fancy and art in gay PETRONIUS please,
The scholar's learning with the courtier's ease.*

For what merit Petronius should be placed among useful critics, I could never discern. There are not above two or three pages containing critical remarks in his work; the chief merit of which is that of telling a story with grace and ease. His own style is more affected than even that of his contemporaries, when the Augustan simplicity was laid aside. Many of his metaphors are far-fetched, and mixed. His character of Horace, however celebrated, and so often quoted as to become nauseous, "Horatii *curiosa fœlicitas*," is surely a very unclassical inversion; for he ought to have called it the *happy carefulness* of Horace, rather than his *careful happiness*. I shall observe, by the way, that the copy of this author found some years ago, bears many signatures of its spuriousness, and particularly of its being forged by a Frenchman. For we have this expression, "ad CASTELLA sese receperunt;" that is, "to their CHATEAUX," instead of "ad *Villas*." They who maintain the genuineness of these fragments

* Ver. 667.

ments of Petronius, will find it difficult to answer the objections of Burman and Perizonius.

42. In grave QUINTILIAN's copious works we find
The justest rules and clearest method join'd.*

To commend Quintilian barely for his method, and to insist merely on this excellence, is below the merit of one of the most rational and elegant of Roman writers. Considering the nature of Quintilian's subject, he afforded copious matter for a more appropriated and poetical character. No author ever adorned a scientifical treatise with so many beautiful metaphors. Quintilian was found in the bottom of a tower of the monastery of St. Gal, by Poggius, as appears by one of his letters, dated 1417, written from Constance, where the council was then sitting. The monastery was about twenty miles from that city. Silius Italicus, and Valerius Flaccus, were found at the same time and place. A history of the manner in which the manuscripts of ancient authors were found, would be an entertaining work to persons of literary curiosity.

43. Thee,

* Ver. 669.

43. Thee, bold LONGINUS, all the Nine inspire,
And bless their critic with a poet's fire.*

This abrupt address to Longinus is more spirited and striking, and more suitable to the character of the person addressed, than if he had coldly spoken of him in the third person. The taste and sensibility of Longinus were exquisite; but his observations are too general, and his method too loose. The precision of the true philosophical critic is lost in the declamation of the florid rhetorician. Instead of shewing for what reason a sentiment or image is SUBLIME, and discovering the secret power by which they affect a reader with pleasure, he is ever intent on producing something SUBLIME *himself*, and strokes of his *own* eloquence. Instead of pointing out the foundation of the grandeur of Homer's imagery, where he describes the motion of Neptune, the critic is endeavouring to rival the poet, by saying, that "there was not room enough in the whole earth to take such another step." He should have shewn why the speech of Phaeton to his son, in a fragment of Euripides, was so lively and

* Ver. 675.

and picturesque; instead of which, he ardently exclaims, "would not you say, that the soul of the writer ascended the chariot with the driver, and was whirled along in the same flight and danger with the rapid horses?" We have lately seen a just specimen of the genuine method of criticising, in Mr. Harris's accurate Discourse on Poetry, Painting, and Music. I have frequently wondered, that Longinus, who mentions Tully, should have taken no notice of Virgil. I suppose he thought him only a servile copier of the Greeks.

44. From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom,
And the same age saw learning fall and Rome.*

"'Twas the fate of Rome to have scarce an intermediate age, or single period of time, between the rise of arts and fall of liberty. No sooner had that nation begun to lose the roughness and barbarity of their manners, and learn of Greece to form their heroes, their orators, and poets, on a right model, than, by their unjust attempt upon the liberty of the world, they justly lost

* Ver. 685.

lost their own. With their liberty, they lost not only their force of eloquence, but even their style and language itself. The poets who afterwards arose among them, were mere unnatural and forced plants. Their two most finished, who came last, and closed the scene, were plainly such as had seen the days of liberty, and felt the sad effects of its departure."*

Shaftesbury proceeds to observe, that when despotism was fully established, not a statue, picture, or medal, not a tolerable piece of architecture, afterwards appeared. And it was, I may add, the opinion of Longinus, and Addison, who adopted it from him, that arbitrary governments were pernicious to the fine arts, as well as to the sciences. Modern history, however, has afforded an example to the contrary. Painting, sculpture, and music, have been seen to arrive to a high perfection in Rome, notwithstanding the slavery and superstition that reign there: nay, superstition itself has been highly productive of these fine arts; for with what enthusiasm must a popish

* Advice to an Author, vol. i. pag. 148. Edit. 12mo.

popish painter work for an altar-piece? There have been instances of painters, who, before they began to work, have always received the sacrament. Neither Dante, Ariosto, nor Tasso, flourished in free governments; and it seems* chimerical to assert, that Milton would never have written his Paradise Lost, if he had not seen monarchy destroyed, and the state thrown into disorder. Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Julio Romano, lived in despotic states. The fine arts, in short, are naturally attendant upon power and luxury. But the sciences require unlimited freedom to raise them to their full vigour and growth. In a MONARCHY, there may be poets, painters, and musicians; but orators, historians, and philosophers, can exist in a REPUBLIC alone.

45. A second deluge learning thus o'er-run,
And the monks finish'd what the Goths begun.†

Every custom and opinion that can degrade and deform humanity, were to be found in the times

* See ENQUIRY into the Life and Writings of Homer, Sect. v., pag. 67.

† Ver. 691.

times here alluded to. The most cruel tyranny, and the grossest superstition, reigned without controul. Men seemed to have lost not only the light of learning, but of their common reason. Duels, divinations, the ordeal, and all the oppressive customs of the feudal laws, were universally practised: witchcraft, possessions, revelations, and astrology,* were generally believed. The† clergy were so ignorant, that, in some of the most solemn acts of synods, such words as these are to be found: "*As my Lord Bishop cannot write himself, at his request I have subscribed.*" They were at the same time so profligate, as to publish Absolutions for any one who had killed his father, mother, sister, or wife; or had committed the most enormous pollutions. On a survey

* Even so late as the reign of Charles V. we are informed by Christana, of Pisa, that her father, who was the king's astrologer, foretold his death to a moment in the year 1380. This astrologer was so highly in favour, and esteemed of such importance, as to have a monthly pension of an hundred livres; a considerable sum for that time.

† They celebrated in many churches, particularly at Rouen, what was called, the FEAST OF THE ASS. On this occasion, the Ass, finely drest, was brought before the altar, and they sung before him this elegant anthem, "*Eh, eh, eh, Sire* ANE! *Eh, eh, eh, Sire* ANE!"

vey of these absurd abominations, one is apt to cry out, in the emphatical words of Lucretius,

Quæ procul a NOBIS flectat Fortuna gubernans!

But we may rest secure, if the observation of an acute writer be true, who says, "Europe will, perhaps, behold ages of a bad taste, but will never again relapse into barbarism. The sole invention of printing has forbidden that event." The only sparks of literature that then remained, were to be found among the Mahometans, and not the Christians. It was from the ARABIANS that we received astronomy, chemistry, medicine, algebra, and arithmetic. Albategni, a Saracen, some of whose manuscripts are now reposited in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, made astronomical observations in the year 880. Our Almanack, AL-MANAC, is an Arabic word. The great church at Cordova, in Spain, where the Saracens kept a magnificent court, is a monument of their skill in architecture. The game of chess, that admirable effort of the human mind, was by them invented; as were tilts and tournaments. Averroes translated, and commented upon, the greatest

part of Aristotle's works,* and was the introducer of that author's philosophy into the † west. It was Gerbert, who, in the reign of Hugh Capet, is said to have introduced into France, the Arabian and Indian cypher: for the Arabians had borrowed from the Indians this manner of computing; and Gerbert learned it from the Saracens when he made a journey into Spain. Gerbert also undertook to make the first clock, the motion of which was regulated by a balance; which method was made use of till the year 1650, when they began to place a pendulum instead of the balance. "Can it be believed, (says Mr. Henault,) that there ever was so little intercourse between the provinces of France, that an abbot of Clugni, being invited by Bouchard, Count of Paris, to bring his Religious to St. Maurdes-Fossés, excused himself from making so long a journey,

* I have seen a translation of his Comment on the Poetics, with this title, "AVERROYS Summa in Aristotelis Poeticam; ex Arabico sermone in Latinum traducta ab Hermano Alemano. Præmittitur Determinatio IBINROSDIN *(another Arabian writer)* in Poetria Aristotelis. Venetiis, apud Georgium Arrivabenum, 1515."

† From Sadi, an Arabian Poet, Milton is said to have taken the grand idea of the bridge over chaos.

ney, into a country UNKNOWN, and to which he was so much a STRANGER?" Charlemagne, indeed, two centuries before this last mentioned time, had endeavoured to bring civility and learning into France: he introduced the Gregorian chant; and established a * school in his palace, where the famous Alcuin, whom he invited from England, instructed the youth. Each of the members of this academy took a particular name; and Charlemagne himself, who did it the honour to become one of its members, assumed that of David. This attempt to civilize his barbarous subjects, was as arduous, and worthy his great genius, as his noble project to open a communication between the Ocean and the Euxine by sea, and to join the Rhine to the Danube by a canal.

46. At length ERASMUS, that great, injur'd name,
(The glory of the priesthood, and the shame!)
Stem'd the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.†

* He is said to have founded the university of Paris. Twyne's Antiq. Acad. Oxon. Apolog. edit. 1608. pag. 158, et seq.

† Ver. 693.

It were to be wished our author had drawn a larger and fuller portrait of this wonderful man, of whom he appears to have been so fond, as to declare in the Letters,* that he had some design of writing his life in Latin. I call Erasmus a wonderful man, not only on account of the variety, and classical purity, of his works, but of that penetration, that strong and acute sense, which enabled him to pierce through the absurdities of the times, and expose them with such poignant ridicule, and attic elegance. A work of humour, and of humour directed to expose the priests, in that age, was indeed a prodigy. The irony of the Encomium on Folly has never been excelled. Erasmus, though a commentator, had taste; and though a Catholic, had charity. His learning was enlivened with wit; and his orthodoxy was tempered with moderation. He was never dazzled with what was called ERUDITION; or misled by that blind and undistinguishing veneration which was naturally paid to the ancients on the first discovery of their writings. By his CICERONIANUS, he repressed the affectation of imitating Tully's manner of expression in every species

* Vol. vii. p. 232.

species of composition. In his ECCLESIASTES, very excellent rules are laid down for preaching. In his DIALOGUES, the superstitions of the Romish church are exposed with all the pleasantry of Lucian; an author to whom his genius bore great resemblance; and some of whose dialogues he has translated with their original spirit. Indeed, among the many translators of Greek authors who flourished at that time, Erasmus seems to have been in all respects the most eminent. To him was the restoration of literature principally owing. More than one prince solicited his friendship, and invited him to their courts. We see in a letter of Erasmus, written in the year 1516, that Francis I. who shared with Leo X. the glory of reviving sciences and arts in Europe, having declared to Petit, his confessor, that he intended to bring into France the most learned men he could find, Petit had charged Budæus, and Cop, the royal physician, to write to Erasmus, to engage him to settle in France: that Stephen Poncher, ambassador from the king at Brussels, pressed him still more; but that Erasmus made his excuses, because his Catholic Majesty Charles V. had retained him in the Low

Countries. The life of Erasmus, which deserves the finest pen, has been wretchedly and frigidly written by Knight; although, indeed, the materials he has collected are curious and useful.

47. But see! each muse in Leo's golden days,
Starts from her trance, and trims her wither'd bays:
Rome's ancient Genius, o'er its ruins spread,
Shakes off the dust, and rears his rev'rend head.*

History has recorded five ages of the world, in which the human mind has exerted itself in an extraordinary manner; and in which its productions in literature and the fine arts, have arrived at a perfection not equalled in other periods. The FIRST, is the age of Philip and Alexander; about which time flourished Socrates, Plato, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Lysippus, Apelles, Phidias, Praxiteles, Thucydides, Xenophon, Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, Philemon. The SECOND age, which seems not to have been sufficiently taken notice of, was that of Ptolomy Philadelphus, king of Ægypt; in which appeared Lycophron, Aratus, Nicander, Apollonius Rhodius, Theocritus, Callimachus, Eratosthenes,

* Ver. 697.

Eratosthenes, Philicus, Erasistratus the physician, Timæus the historian, Cleanthes, Diogenes the painter, and Sostrates the architect. This prince, from his love of learning, commanded the Old Testament to be translated into Greek. The THIRD age is that of Julius Cæsar, and Augustus; marked with the illustrious names of Laberius, Catullus, Lucretius, Cicero, Livy, Varro, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid, Phædrus, Vitruvius, Dioscorides. The FOURTH age was that of Julius II. and Leo X. which produced Ariosto, Tasso, Fracastorius, Sannazarius, Vida, Bembo, Sadolet, Machiavel, Guicciardin, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian. The FIFTH age, is that of Louis XIV. in France, and of king William and queen Anne in England; in which, or thereabouts, are to be found, Corneille, Moliere, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, Bossuet, La Rochefoucault, Paschal, Bourdaloue, Patru, Malbranche, De Retz, La Bruyere, St. Real, Fenelon, Lully, Le Sœur, Poussin, La Brun, Puget, Theodon, Gerardon, Edelinck, Nanteuil, * Perrault, Dryden, Tillotson, Temple, POPE, Addison,

* The Architect.

Addison, Garth, Congreve, Rowe, Prior, Lee, Swift, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, Boyle, Locke, Newton, Clarke, Kneller, Thornhill, Jervas, Purcell, Mead, Freind.

Concerning the particular encouragement given by Leo X. to polite literature, and the fine arts, I forbear to enlarge; because a friend of mine is at present engaged in writing, THE HISTORY OF THE AGE OF LEO X. It is a noble period, and full of those most important events which have had the greatest influence on human affairs. Such is the discovery of the West-Indies, by the Spaniards; and of a passage to the East, by the Portugueze: the invention of printing; the reformation of religion; with many others: all which will be insisted upon at large, and their consequences displayed. I shall only here transiently observe, that some efforts to emerge from barbarity had long before this time appeared in Italy. Dante wrote his sublime* and original poem,

* See particularly the beginning of the third canto of the INFERNO, as also the beginning of the sixth, particularly the inscription over the gate of Hell:

Per

poem, which is a kind of satirical epic, and which abounds in images and sentiments almost worthy of Homer, but whose works he had never seen, about the year 1310. Giotto, the disciple of Cimabue, the friend of Dante, and subject of his praises, was employed, about the same time, by Benedict XI. and a picture of mosaic work done by him, over the gate of St. Peter's church at Rome, is still remaining. A Tuscan, called Guy of Arezzo, invented the musical notes in use at present: and Bruneleschi built palaces at Florence, in the style of ancient architecture. Soon afterwards, Boccace and Petrarch polished, and fixed the standard of, the Italian language.* To Petrarch the honour is

 generally

Per me si va nella città dolente;
Per me si va nell' eterno dolor, &c.
Lasciate ogni speranza, voi, che entrate.

Whence Milton,

——Hope never comes,
That comes to all——

* " Veggiamo in un medesimo progresso di tempo (dal regno principalmente dell' una, e dell' altra Sicilia, e poi della Lombardia, e de vari, e distinti luoghi d'Italia) sorgere scrittori, i quali anno favella con Dante, Petrarcha, Boccacio, ed altri Toscani

generally attributed of having restored* the elegance of the Latin tongue; particularly in poetry. But a late acute searcher into antiquity, whose death is justly lamented, the learned Scipio Maffei, has informed us,† in a curious passage, that this was not so much owing to Petrarch, as to Albertino Mussato, a native of Padua; with whose merit the learned seem not to be sufficiently acquainted. Mussato died very old, after having borne the greatest offices in his country, in the year 1329; that is to say, thirty-five years before Petrarch. He wrote not only many books of a history of his own times, and of the emperor Henry VII. but also an heroic poem on the siege of Padua, by the Veronese, under the great

Toscani autori comune, e con loro anche comune l' autorità, da ogni regolator dalla lingua riconosciuta, i quali, tra molti altri, furono Guidotto Bolognese, Marco Polo Veneziano, Pier Crescenzio da Bologna, Guido Giudice Messinese, Giacopo Colonna Romano, Frederico II. imperadore, Pier delle Vigne Capoano, Benvenuto da Imola, Fra Jacopone da Todi, Onesto Bolognese, Guido Guislieri, Semprebene, Fabrovio, Guido Guislieri, Jacopo della Lana, Giotto Mantovano."

Gravina della Rag. Poet. lib. ii. p. 170.

* When Petrarch wrote his Africa, he had not seen Silius Italicus.

† TEATRO Italiano. In Verona, 1723. tom. i. p. 4.

great Can; together with eclogues, elegies, epistles in verse, and an Ovidian Cento. However, to form a full judgment in this case, one need only peruse his two Latin tragedies, entitled ECCERINIS, and ACHILLES, which he composed in the style and manner of Seneca; and which were the first regular and perfect dramas that are to be found since the barbarous and obscure ages.*

48. Immortal VIDA; on whose honour'd brow
The Poet's bays and Critic's ivy grow.†

The merits of Vida seem not to have been particularly attended to in England, till POPE had bestowed this commendation upon him; although the Poetics had been correctly published at Oxford, by Basil Kennet, some time before. The SILK-WORMS of Vida are written with classical purity, and with a just mixture of the styles of

* Scardonius, in his Antiquities of Padua, relates, page 130, that Alber. Mussato was so highly honoured, that the Bishop of Padua gave him a laurel crown, and issued an edict, that, on every Christmas-day, the doctors, regents, and professors, of the two colleges in that city, should go to his house in solemn procession with wax tapers in their hands, and offer him a triple crown.

† Ver. 705.

of Lucretius and Virgil. It was a happy choice to write a poem on CHESS: nor is the execution less happy. The various stratagems, and manifold intricacies, of this ingenious game, so difficult to be described in Latin, are here expressed with the greatest perspicuity and elegance; so that, perhaps, the game might be learned from this description. Amidst many prosaic flatnesses, there are many fine strokes in the CHRISTIAD; particularly, his angels, with respect to their persons and insignia, are drawn with that dignity which we so much admire in Milton, who seems to have had his eye on those passages. *Gravina applauds Vida, for having found out a method to introduce the whole history of our Saviour's life, by putting it into the mouth of St. Joseph and St. John, who relate it to Pilate. But surely this speech, consisting of as many lines as that of Dido to Æneas, was too long to be made on such an occasion, when Christ was brought before the tribunal of Pilate, to be judged, and condemned to death. The Poetics are, perhaps, the most perfect of his compositions: they are excellently translated by Pitt. Vida had formed himself

* Della Ragion; Poet. page 127.

himself upon Virgil, who is therefore his hero: he has too much depreciated Homer. Although his precepts principally regard epic poetry, yet many of them are applicable to every species of composition. This poem has the praise of being one of the * first, if not the very first, pieces of criticism, that appeared in Italy since the revival of learning: for it was finished, as is evident from a short advertisement prefixed to it, in the year 1520. It is remarkable, that most of the great poets about this time wrote an Art of Poetry. Trissino, a name respected for giving to Europe the first regular epic poem, and for first daring to throw off the bondage of rhyme,† published at Vicenza, in the year 1529, DELLA POETICA, *divisioni quattro*, several years before his Italia Liberata. We have of Fracastorius, NAUGERIUS, *sive de Poetica dialogus*, Venetiis, 1555. Minturnus, DE POETA, *libri sex*, appeared

* Victorius's Latin translation of Aristotle's Poetics was published at Florence, 1560. Castlevetro's Italian one at Vienna, 1570.

† As did his contemporary, Alonso de Fuentes, in Spain, who published at Seville, in 1577, in blank verse, a Poem, entitled, La Suma de Philosophia.

peared at Venice 1559. Bernardo Tasso, the father of Torquato, and author of an epic poem entitled L'Amadigi, wrote RAGIONAMENTO *della Poesia*, printed at Venice, 1562. And to pay the highest honour to criticism, the great Torquato Tasso himself wrote DISCORSI *del Poema Eroico*, printed at Venice, 1587. These discourses are full of learning and taste. But I must not omit a curious anecdote, which * Menage has given us in his Anti-Baillet; namely, that Sperone claimed these discourses as his own: for he thus speaks of them in one of his letters to Felice Paciotto: "Laudo voi infinitamente di voler scrivere della poetica; della quale interrogato molto fiate dal Tasso,† e rispondendogli io liberamente, si come soglio, egli n'a fatto un volume, e mandato al Signior Scipio Gonzaga per cosa sua, e non mea: ma io ne chiarirò il mondo."

49. And

* Tom. 1. page 353.

† It may be remarked, as an instance of Tasso's JUDGMENT, that he himself did not approve the episode of Sophronia and Olindo, so commonly censured.

49. And BOILEAU still in right of Horace sways.*

May I be pardoned for declaring it as my opinion, that Boileau's is the best † Art of Poetry extant? The brevity of his precepts, enlivened by proper imagery, the justness of his metaphors, the harmony of his numbers, as far as alexandrine lines will admit, the exactness of his method, the perspicacity of his remarks, and the energy of his style, all duly considered, may render this opinion not unreasonable. It is scarcely to be conceived, how much is comprehended in four short cantos.‡ He that has well digested these, cannot be said to be ignorant of any important rule of poetry. The tale of the physician turning architect, in the fourth canto, is

* Ver. 714.

† It was translated into Portugueze verse, by Count d'Ericeyra.

‡ It is remarkable, Boileau declared he had never read Vida; to whom, indeed, he is much superior. Patru, whom he always consulted on his works, dissuaded him from undertaking this subject; because he thought the French language incapable of delivering precepts of this sort with becoming elegance and grace.

is told with true pleasantry. It is to this work Boileau owes his immortality; which was of the highest utility to his nation, in diffusing a just way of thinking and writing; banishing every species of false wit, and introducing a general taste for the manly simplicity of the ancients, on whose writings this poet had formed his taste. Boileau's chief talent was the DIDACTIC. His fancy was not the predominant faculty of his mind. Fontenelle has thus characterised him: "Il étoit grand & excellent versificateur, pourvû cependant que cette louange se renferme dans ses beaux jours, dont la différence avec les autres est bien marquée; & faisoit souvent dire *Helas!* & *Hola!* mais il n'étoit pas grand poëte, si l'on entend par ce mot, comme on le doit, celui qui FAIT, qui INVENTE, qui CREE."*

50. Such was the muse, whose rules and practice tell,
"Nature's chief master-piece is writing well."†

This high panegyric procured to POPE the acquaintance, and afterwards the constant friendship,

* Œuvres de Fontenelle. Tom. iii. page 376. à Paris, 1752.

† Ver. 723.

ship, of the Duke of Buckingham; who, in his ESSAY here alluded to, has followed the method of Boileau, in discoursing on the various species of poetry in their different gradations, to no other purpose than to manifest his own inferiority. The piece is, indeed, of the satiric, rather than of the preceptive, kind. The coldness and neglect with which this writer, formed only on the French critics, speaks of Milton, must be considered as proofs of his want of critical discernment, or of critical courage. I can recollect no performance of Buckingham, that stamps him a true genius. His reputation was owing to his rank. In reading his poems, one is apt to exclaim, with our author,

> What woeful stuff this madrigal would be,
> In some starv'd hackney sonnetteer or me?
> But let a LORD ONCE OWN the happy lines,
> How the wit brightens! how the style refines!
> Before his sacred name flies every fault,
> And each exalted stanza teems with thought.

The best part of Buckingham's ESSAY, is that in which he gives a ludicrous account of the plan of modern tragedy. I should add, that his compliment to POPE, prefixed to his poems, con-

tains a pleasing picture of the sedateness and retirement proper to age, after the tumults of public life; and by its moral turn, breathes the spirit, if not of a poet, yet of an amiable old Man.

51. Such was Roscommon.* — — —

An Essay on Translated Verse seems at first sight to be a barren subject; yet Roscommon has decorated it with many precepts of utility and taste, and enlivened it with a tale, in imitation of Boileau. It is indisputably better written, in a closer and more vigorous style, than the last-mentioned Essay. Roscommon was more learned than Buckingham. He was bred under Bochart, at Caen, in Normandy. He had laid a design of forming a society for the refining, and fixing the standard of our language; in which project his intimate friend Dryden was a principal assistant. This was the first attempt of that sort; and, I fear, we shall never see another set on foot in our days: even though Mr. Johnson has lately given us so excellent a dictionary. It may be remarked, to the praise of Roscommon, that

* Ver. 725.

that he was the first critic who had taste and spirit enough,* publicly to praise the Paradise

* The editors of Milton have been curious in endeavouring to search out who were the very first persons that brought the Paradise Lost into vogue and esteem. The following is, I believe, the very first passage in which any public notice was taken of its excellence. It was written by Edward Philips, Milton's nephew, and who had been one of his scholars, in a treatise, entitled, Tractatulus de Carmine Dramatico Poetarum veterum; cui subjungitur compendiosa Enumeratio Poetarum. Londini, 1670. This was three years after the first publication of Paradise Lost. The words follow, "Iohannes Miltonus, præter alia quæ scripsit elegantissima tum Anglicè tùm Latinè, nuper publici juris fecit Paradisum amissam, Poema, quod, sive Sublimitatem Argumenti, sive Leporem simul & Majestatem Styli, sive Sublimitatem Inventionis, sive Similitudines & Descriptiones quam maximè naturales respiciamus, verè Heroicum, ni fallor, audiet: Plurium enim suffragiis qui non nesciunt judicare, censetur Perfectionem hujus generis Poematis assecutum esse." From many circumstances in the same Treatise, particularly his censure of rhyme, his great commendations of the best Italian poets, and of Spenser, their true son and *disciple*, (and father of Milton,) it is evident from whence this Philips imbibed his principles of criticism. So early as the year 1677, Dryden speaks thus highly of Paradise Lost, in the preface to his *State of Innocence*: "Undoubtedly, it is one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime Poems, which either this age or nation has produced." Again, in the year 1685, in the preface to the 2d vol. of the Miscellanies, he says, "Milton's Paradise Lost is admirable. But cannot I admire the heighth of his invention, and the strength of his expression, without defending his antiquated words?" Again, in the

Lost; with a noble encomium of which, and a rational recommendation of blank verse, he concludes his performance. Fenton, in his Observations on Waller, has accurately delineated his character: "His imagination might have probably been more fruitful and sprightly, if his judgment had been less severe: but that severity, delivered in a masculine, clear, succinct style, contributed to make him so eminent in the didactical manner, that no man with justice can affirm, he was ever equalled by any of our own nation, without confessing at the same time, that he is inferior to none. In some other kinds of writing, his genius seems to have wanted fire to attain the point of perfection: but who can attain it?"*

52. Such

the year 1688, he wrote the six celebrated lines to be prefixed to the first folio edition with cuts; which were all designed by an Italian artist, named *Medina*, except that for the 9th Book, which was drawn by *B. Lens*, senior; and that for the 12th Book, designed by Dr. *Aldrich*. Dr. *Metcalf*, of Oxford, had in his possession the original drawings for all those prints. It is also observable, that in a copy of verses entitled, *Decretum Oxoniense*, in the 2d vol. of the Musæ Anglicanæ, written in the year 1683, this poem is greatly extolled, at the same time that the author's political principles are severely handled.

* Edit. 12mo. page 136.

52. Such late was WALSH, the muse's judge and friend.*

If POPE has here given too magnificent an eulogy to Walsh, it must be attributed to friendship, rather than to judgment. Walsh was in general a flimsy and frigid writer. The Rambler calls his works PAGES OF INANITY. His three letters to POPE, however, are well written. His remarks on the nature of pastoral poetry, on borrowing from the ancients, and against florid conceits, are worthy perusal.† POPE owed much to Walsh: it was he who gave him a very important piece of advice in his early youth; for he used to tell our author, that there was one way still left open for him, by which he might excel any of his predecessors, which was, by CORRECTNESS; that though, indeed, we had several great poets, we as yet could boast of none that were perfectly CORRECT; and that, therefore, he advised him to make this quality his particular study.

* Ver. 729.

† Vol. vii. pag. 67, &c.

Correctness is a vague term, frequently used without meaning and precision. It is perpetually the nauseous cant of the French critics, and of their advocates and pupils, that the English writers are generally INCORRECT. If CORRECTNESS implies an absence of petty faults, this perhaps may be granted. If it means, that, because their tragedians have avoided the irregularities of Shakespeare, and have observed a juster œconomy in their fables, therefore the Athalia, for instance, is preferable to Lear, the notion is groundless and absurd. Though the Henriade* should

* An epic poem in couplets! In the Geneva edition of the Henriade, we are informed of a curious anecdote: when it was printed at London, in 1726, in quarto, by subscription, Mr. Dadiky, a Greek, and native of Smyrna, who at that time resided in London, saw, by chance, the first leaf as it was printing, where was the following line:

Qui força les Francois à devenir heureux:

he immediately paid a visit to the author, and said to him, "I am of the country of Homer; he did not begin his poems by a stroke of wit, by an enigma." The author immediately corrected the line: but I beg leave to add, that he did not correct many others of the same *modern* kind. Voltaire has dropt a remark in the last edition of his Essay on Epic Poetry, which is not, indeed, very favourable to the taste of his countrymen,

should be allowed to be free from any very gross absurdities, yet who will dare to rank it with the Paradise Lost? Some of their most perfect tragedies abound in faults as contrary to the nature of that species of poetry, and as destructive of its end, as the fools or grave-diggers of Shakespeare. That the French may boast some excellent critics, particularly Bossu, Boileau, Fenelon, and Brumoy, cannot be denied; but that these are sufficient to form a taste upon, without having recourse to the genuine fountains of all po-

trymen, but is perfectly true and just, and which he seems to have forgotten in some of his late assertions:

"It must be owned, that it is more difficult for a Frenchman to succeed in epic poetry, than for any other person; but neither the constraint of rhyme, nor the dryness of our language, is the cause of this difficulty. Shall I venture to name the cause? It is, *because of all polished nations, ours* is the *least poetic*. The works in verse, which are most in vogue in France, are pieces for the Theatre. These pieces must be written in a style that approaches to that of conversation. Despreaux has treated only *Didactic* subjects, which require simplicity. It is well known, that exactness and elegance constitute the chief merit of his verses and those of Racine; and when Despreaux attempted a sublime ode, he was no longer Despreaux. These examples have accustomed the French to too uniform a march——."

lite literature, I mean the Grecian writers, no one but a superficial reader can allow.

I conclude these reflections with a remarkable fact. In no polished nation, after criticism has been much studied, and the rules of writing established, has any very extraordinary work ever appeared. This has visibly been the case in Greece, in Rome, and in France, after Aristotle, Horace, and Boileau, had written their ARTS OF POETRY. In our own country, the rules of the drama, for instance, were never more completely understood than at present: yet what UNINTERESTING, though FAULTLESS, tragedies, have we lately seen! So much better is our judgment than our execution. How to account for the fact here mentioned, adequately and justly, would be attended with all those difficulties that await discussions relative to the productions of the human mind; and to the delicate and secret causes that influence them. Whether or no, the natural powers be not confined and debilitated by that timidity and caution which is occasioned by a rigid regard to the dictates of art; or whether that philosophical, that geometrical, and systema-

tical, spirit so much in vogue, which has spread itself from the sciences even into polite literature, by consulting only REASON, has not diminished and destroyed SENTIMENT, and made our poets write from and to the HEAD, rather than the HEART; or whether, lastly, when just models, from which the rules have necessarily been drawn, have once appeared, succeeding writers, by vainly and ambitiously striving to surpass those just models, and to shine and surprise, do not become stiff, and forced, and affected in their thoughts and diction.

SECTION IV.

OF THE RAPE OF THE LOCK.

IF the Moderns have excelled the Ancients in any species of writing, it seems to be in satire, and particularly in that kind of satire which is conveyed in the form of the epopee; a pleasing vehicle of satire, seldom, if ever, used by the ancients; for we know so little of the Margites of Homer, that it cannot well be produced as an example. As the poet disappears in this way of writing, and does not deliver the intended censure in his own proper person, the satire becomes more delicate, because more oblique. Add to this, that a tale or story more strongly engages and interests the reader, than a series of precepts or reproofs, or even of characters themselves, however lively and natural. An heroi-comic poem may therefore be justly esteemed the most excellent kind of satire.

The

The invention of it is usually ascribed to Alessandro Tassoni; who, in the year 1622, published at Paris, a poem composed by him, in a few months of the year 1611, entitled LA SECCHIA RAPITA; or, *The Rape of the Bucket.* To avoid giving offence, it was first printed under the name of Androvini Melisoni. It was afterwards reprinted at Venice, corrected, with the name of the author, and with some illustrations of Gasparo Salviani. But the learned and curious Crescembini, in his *Istoria della Volgar Poesia,** informs us, that it is doubtful whether the invention of the † heroi-comic poem ought to be ascribed to Tassoni, or to Francesco Bracciolini, who wrote ‡ LO SCHERNO DE GLI DEI, which performance, though it was printed four years after LA SECCHIA, is nevertheless declared in an epistle prefixed, to have been written many years sooner. The real subject of Tassoni's poem, was the

* Lib. i. pag. 78. In Roma, per il Chracas, 1698.

† E tal Poesia puo diffinirsi, e chiamarsi, immitazione d'azione seria fatto con riso. Crescembini, ibid. See Quadrio also.

‡ In Venetia, 1627. There is prefixed, by way of preface, a facetious dialogue betwixt Thalia and Urania.

the war which the inhabitants of Modena declared against those of Bologna, on the refusal of the latter to restore to them some towns which had been detained ever since the time of the emperor Frederic II. The author artfully made use of a popular tradition, according to which it was believed, that a certain wooden bucket, which is kept at Modena, in the treasury of the cathedral, came from Bologna, and that it had been forcibly taken away by the Modenese. Crescembini adds, that because Tassoni had severely ridiculed the Bolognese, Bartolomeo Bocchini, to revenge his countrymen, printed at Venice, 1641, a tragico-heroi-comic poem, entitled LE PAZZIE DE SAVI, *overo*, IL LAMBERTACCIO, in which the Modenese are spoken of with much contempt. The Italians have a fine turn for works of humour, in which they abound. They have another poem of this species, called MALMANTILE RACQUISTATO, written by Lorenzo Lippi, in the year 1676, which Crescembini* highly commends, calling it, "Spiritosisimo e legiadrissimo poema giacoso." It was afterwards reprinted at Florence

* Pag. 368. lib. v.

Florence 1688, with the useful annotations of Puccio Lamoni, a Florentine painter, who was himself no contemptible poet.

The LUTRIN of Boileau was the second remarkable poem, in which the Serious and Comic were happily blended. Boileau himself has left us a circumstantial account of what gave occasion to this poem; which account, because it is entertaining, and not printed in some later editions of his works, I will insert at length. "I shall not here act like Ariosto, who frequently, when he is going to relate the most absurd story in the world, solemnly protests it to be true, and supports it by the authority of archbishop Turpin. For my part, I freely declare, the whole poem of the DESK is nothing but pure fiction; that it is all invented, even to the name itself of the place where the action passes. An odd occasion gave rise to this poem. In a company I was lately engaged in, the conversation turned upon epic poetry: every one delivered his opinion, according to his abilities: when mine was asked, I confirmed what I had advanced in my Art of Poetry, that an heroic poem, to be truly excellent, ought

to

to be charged with little MATTER, which it was the business of invention to support and extend. The opinion was warmly contested: but, after many reasons for and against, it happened, as it generally does in this sort of disputes, that nobody was convinced, and that each continued in his own opinion. The heat of dispute being over, we talked on other subjects; and laughed at the violence into which we had been betrayed, in discussing a question of so little consequence. We moralized on the folly of men who pass * almost their whole lives in treating the greatest trifles in a serious manner; and in making to themselves an important affair of something quite indifferent. To this purpose, a country gentleman related a famous quarrel, that had lately happened in a little church in his province, between the treasurer and the chantor, the two principal dignitaries of that church, about the place in which a reading-desk was to stand. We thought it a ridiculous affair. Upon this, one of the critics

* It ought to be remarked, that Boileau, in a subsequent edition, 1683, withdrew this Preface. See Sect. XII. of this Essay. Desmarets severely and acutely criticised some parts of this poem.

critics in company, who could not so soon forget our late dispute, asked me, if I, who thought so little MATTER necessary for an heroic poem, would undertake to write one on a quarrel so little abounding in incidents, as this of the two ecclesiastics? I said, Why not? before I had even reflected on the question. This made the company laugh, and I could not help laughing with them; not in the least imagining, that I should ever be able to keep my word. But finding myself at leisure in the evening, I revolved the subject in my mind, and having considered in every view the pleasantry that it would admit of, I made twenty verses, which I shewed to my friends. They were diverted with this beginning. The pleasure which I saw these gave them, induced me to write twenty more. Thus, from twenty verses to twenty, I lengthened the work to near nine hundred. This is the whole history of the trifle I now offer to the public. It is a new kind of burlesque, which I have introduced into our language; for as in the other kind of burlesque, that of Scarron, Dido and Æneas spoke like fish-

women

women and porters, in this of mine, a * clock-maker and his wife talk like Dido and Æneas. I do not know whether my poem will have all the qualities requisite to satisfy a reader: but I dare flatter myself, that it will at least be allowed to have the grace of novelty; because I do not conceive, that there are any works of this nature in our language; the DEFAITES DES BOUTS RIMES of Sarasin being rather a mere allegory than a poem, as this is."

"On a subject seemingly so unpromising, and incapable of ornament, has Boileau found a method of raising a poem full of beautiful imagery, which appears like that magnificent city† which the greatest of princes caused to be built in a morass. Boileau has enlivened this piece with many unexpected incidents, and entertaining episodes;

Maxima de nihilo nascitur historia. Prop.

particularly

* Altered afterwards to a BARBER. See the commentary of Brossette.

† Petersburg.

particularly that of the Perruquier, in the second canto, and of the Battle of the Books, in the fifth. The satire throughout is poignant, though polite, to the last degree. The indolence and luxury of the priests are ridiculed with the most artful delicacy. What a picture has he drawn of the chamber and bed of the treasurer, where every thing was calculated to promote and preserve inactivity and ease!

Dans le réduit obscur d'un alcove enfoncée*
S'éleve un lit de plume a grands frais amassée.
Quatre rideaux pompeux, par un double contour,
En défendent l'entrée à la clarté du jour.
Là, parmi les douceurs d'un tranquille silence,
Regne sur le duvet une heureuse Indolence.
C'est là que le Prélat, muni d'un déjeûner,
Dormant d'un leger somme, attendoit le dîner.
La jeunesse en sa fleur brille sur son visage,
Son menton sur son sein descend a double étage:
Et son corps ramassé dans sa courte grosseur,
Fait gémir les coussins sous sa molle épaisseur.†

The astonishment of Gilotin, the treasurer's almoner, to find that his master intends to go out before

* Compare with this the account of the Canon fed by his Housekeeper, in Gil Blas.

† Chant. i.

before dinner, is extremely natural; and his remonstrances are inimitably droll and pertinent:

Lui montre le péril, que midi va sonner;
Qu'il va faire, s'il sort, refroidir le dîner.
Quelle fureur, dit-il, quel aveugle caprice,
Quand le dîner est prêt vous appelle a l'Office?
De votre dignité soûtenez mieux l'éclat.
Est-ce pour travailler que vous êtes Prélat?
A quoi bon ce dégoût & ce zele inutile?
Est-il donc pour jeûner Quatre temps, ou Vigile?
Reprenez vos esprits, & souvenez-vous bien,
Qu'un dîner rechauffé ne valut jamais rien.*

How admirably is the character of an ignorant and eating priest preserved in this speech of the sleek and pampered Canon Evrard, one of the drones, who,

— — In that exhaustless hive
On fat pluralities supinely thrive!†

Moi? dit-il, qu'à mon âge, Ecolier tout nouveau,
J'aille pour un Lutrin me troubler le cerveau?
O le plaisant conseil! non, non, songeons à vivre,
Va maigrir, si tu veux, & secher sur un Livre.
Pour moi, je lis la Bible autant que l'Alcoran:
Je sai ce qu'un Fermier nous doit rendre par an:
Sur quelle vigne à Rheims nous avons hypothéque;
Vingt

* Chant. i. † Isis.

Vingt muids, rangez chez moi, sont ma Bibliothéque.
En plaçant un Pupitre on croit nous rabbaisser,
Mon bras seul, sans Latin, saura le renverser.
Que m'importe qu'Arnauld me condamne ou m'approve?
J'abbats ce qui me nuit par-tout où je le trouve.
C'est là mon sentiment. A quoi bon tant d'apprêts?
Du reste, déjeunons, Messieurs, & buvons frais.*

His knowledge of the rents of his church, and of the mortgages belonging to it, his scorn of the pious and laborious Arnauld, his contempt of learning, and, above all, his ruling passion of good-eating, are strokes highly comic. It is wonderful the ecclesiastics of France were not as much irritated by the publication of the LUTRIN† as by the TARTUFFE of Moliere, which was suppressed by their interest after it had been acted a few nights; although, at the same time, a very profane farce was permitted to have a long run. When Louis XIV. ‡ expressed to the prince of Condé, his wonder at the different

 fates

* Chant. iv.

† This poem was parodied by a M. de Bonnecorse, of Marseilles, in a piece entitled, *Lutrigot:* the author had been ridiculed by Boileau in the 5th Book of the Lutrin.

‡ The king insisting upon Boileau's telling him who was the most *original* writer of his time, he answered, *Moliere.*

fates of these two pieces, and asked the reason of it, the prince answered, "In the farce, RELIGION *only* is ridiculed; but Moliere, in the TARTUFFE, has attacked even the PRIESTS."

BOILEAU has raised his subjects by many personifications; particularly, in the beginning of the sixth canto, PIETY, who had retired to the great Carthusian monastery on the Alps, is introduced as repairing to Paris, accompanied by FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY, in order to make her complaint to THEMIS: to which may be added, the monstrous figure of CHICANERY, attended by FAMINE, WANT, SORROW, and RUIN, in the beginning of the fifth canto. The chief divinity that acts throughout the poem, is DISCORD; which goddess is represented as coming from a convent of Cordeliers. A fine stroke of satire; but imitated from the satirical Ariosto, who makes Michael find DISCORD in a cloister, instead of SILENCE, whom he there searched for in vain. NIGHT is also introduced as an actress, with great propriety, in the third canto; where she repairs to the famous old tower at Montlery, in order to find out an owl which she may convey

into the DESK, and which afterwards produces so ridiculous a consternation. SLOTH is another principal personage: she also is discovered in the dormitory of a monastery.*

Les Plaisirs nonchalans folâstrent à l'entour.
L'un paitrit dans un coin l'embonpoint des Chanoines;
L'autre broye en riant le vermillon des Moines.†

The speech she afterwards makes has a peculiar beauty, as it ends in the middle of a line, and by that means shews her inability to proceed.

The third heroi-comic poem was the DISPENSARY of Garth: a palpable imitation of the LUTRIN, and the best satire on the physicians extant, except the SANGRADO of Le Sage, who have, indeed, been the object of almost every

 satirist.

* This was the monastery of *Citeaux;* and Boileau visited it when he attended Louis XIV. in his march to Strasbourg. The monks received the poet with great politeness and hospitality, and desired him to shew them the place in their monastery where this goddess lodged.

† Chant. ii.

satirist. The behaviour and sentiments of SLOTH, the first imaginary being that occurs, are almost literally translated from Boileau; particularly the compliment that SLOTH pays to king William, whose actions disturb her repose:

> Or if some cloyster's refuge I implore,
> Where holy drones o'er dying tapers snore;
> The peals of Nassau's arms these eyes unclose,
> Mine he molests, to give the world repose.*

> Je croyois, loin des lieux d'où ce prince m'exile,
> Que l'Eglise, du moins, m'assûroit un azile.
> Mais envain j'esperois y regner sans effroi:
> Moines, Abbés, Prieurs, tout s'arme contre moi.†

Garth, in ridiculing the clergy, speaks of that order with more acrimony than Boileau, who merely laughs at them. He has introduced many excellent parodies on the classics: among which I cannot forbear quoting one, which is an imitation of some passages, which the reader will remember, in Virgil's sixth book, and where the circumstances are happily inverted.

Since

* Cant. i. † Chant. ii.

* Since, said the ghost, with pity you'll attend,
Know, I'm Guiacum, once your firmest friend;
And on this barren beach, in discontent,
Am doom'd to stay, 'till th' angry pow'rs relent.
These spectres seam'd with scars, that threaten here,
The victims of my late ill conduct are:
They vex with endless clamours my repose;
This wants his palate, that demands his nose;
And here they execute stern Pluto's will,
And ply me every moment with a pill.† *

This author has been guilty of a strange impropriety, which cannot be excused, in making the fury DISEASE talk like a critic, give rules of writing, and a panegyric on the best poets of the age.‡ The descent into the earth in the sixth canto, is a fine mixture of poetry and philosophy; the hint is taken from the § SYPHILIS

* Boileau says admirably of his physician, Chant. 4. Art. Poet.

Le rhume à son aspect se change en pleurisie;
Et par lui la migraine est bientôt phrénésie.

† Cant. vi. ‡ Cant. iv.

§ "Ed in vero nella Sifillide de l'autore, fe connoscere quanto una mente della filosofia rigenerata, ed incitata dal furor poetico prevaglia; e con quanto spirito muover possa, ed agitare le materie, che in se rivolge, e fuor di se in armoniosi versi diffonde."
GRAVINA. p. 124. lib. 1.

of Fracastorius. Garth's versification is flowing and musical; his style, perspicuous and neat; and the poem, in general, abounds with sallies of wit, and nervous satire.

The RAPE OF THE LOCK, now before us, is the fourth, and most excellent of the heroi-comic poems. The subject was a quarrel occasioned by a little piece of gallantry of Lord Petre, who, in a party of pleasure, found means to cut off a favourite lock of Mrs. Arabella Fermor's hair. POPE was desired to write it, in order to put an end to the quarrel it produced, by Mr. Caryl, who had been secretary to Queen Mary, author of Sir Solomon Single, a comedy, and of some translations in Dryden's Miscellanies. POPE was accustomed to say, 'What I wrote fastest always pleased most." The first sketch of this exquisite piece, which Addison called MERUM SAL, was written in less than a fortnight, in two cantos only: but it was so universally applauded, that, in the next year, our poet enriched it with the machinery of the sylphs, and extended it to five cantos; when it was printed with a letter to Mrs. Fermor, far superior to any of Voiture.

The

The insertion of the machinery of the sylphs in proper places, without the least appearance of its being awkwardly stitched in, is one of the happiest efforts of judgment and art. He took the idea of these invisible beings, so proper to be employed in a poem of this nature, from a little French book entitled, Le Comte de Gabalis, of which is given the following account in an entertaining writer. " The Abbé Villars, who came from Thoulouse to Paris, to make his fortune by preaching, is the author of this diverting work. The five dialogues of which it consists, are the result of those gay conversations in which the Abbé was engaged with a small circle of men, of fine wit and humour, like himself. When this book first appeared, it was universally read, as innocent and amusing. But at length its consequences were perceived, and reckoned dangerous, at a time when this sort of curiosities began to gain credit. Our devout preacher was denied the chair, and his book forbidden to be read. It was not clear whether the author intended to be ironical, or spoke all seriously. The second volume, which he promised, would have decided the question; but

the unfortunate Abbé was soon afterwards assassinated by ruffians on the road to Lyons. The laughers gave out, that the gnomes and sylphs, disguised like ruffians, had shot him, as a punishment for revealing the secrets of the Cabala; a crime not to be pardoned by these jealous spirits, as Villars himself has declared in his book.*

It may not be improper to give a specimen of this author's manner, who has lately been well imitated in the way of mixing jest with earnest, in an elegant piece called HERMIPPUS REDIVIVUS. The Comte de Gabalis being about to initiate his pupil into the most profound mysteries of the Rosicrusian philosophy, advises him to consider seriously, whether or no he had courage and resolution sufficient to RENOUNCE all those obstacles which might prevent his arising to that height which the figure of his nativity promised. "Le mot de RENONCER, (says the scholar,) m'effraya, & je ne doutai point qu'il n'allât me proposer de renoncer au baptême ou au paradis.

* Mêlanges d'Histoire & de Litterature. By Dom Noel Dargonne, disguised under the name of Vigneul Marville, Tom. prem. pag. 275. edit. Rotterdam, 1700.

paradis. Ainsi ne sçachant comme me tirer de ce mauvais pas; Renoncer, lui dis-je, Monsieur quoi-faut, il renoncer à quelque chose? Vraiment, reprit-il, il le faut bien; & il le faut si necessairement, qu'il faut commencer par-là. Je ne sçai si vous pourrez vous résoudre: mais je sçai bien que la sagesse n'habite point dans un corps sujet au péché, comme elle n'entre point dans une ame prevenue d'erreur ou de malice. Les sages ne vous admettront jamais à leur compagnie, si vous ne renoncez dès à présent à un chose qui ne peut compatir avec la sagesse. *Il faut*, ajoûta-t-il tout bas en se baissant à mon oreille, *il faut renoncer à tout commerce charnel avec les femmes.*"* On a diligent perusal of this book, I cannot find that POPE has borrowed any particular circumstances relating to these spirits, but merely the general idea of their existence.

These machines are vastly superior to the allegorical personages of Boileau and Garth; not only on account of their novelty, but for the exquisite poetry, and oblique satire, which they have

* LE COMTE DE GABALIS, ou ENTRETIENS sur les Sciences Secretes. Second ENTRETIEN, page 30. à Amsterdam, 1671.

have given the poet an opportunity to display. The business and petty concerns of a fine lady, receive an air of importance from the notion of their being perpetually overlooked, and conducted, by the interposition of celestial agents.

It is judicious to open the poem, by introducing the Guardian Sylph warning Belinda against some secret impending danger. The account which Ariel* gives of the nature, office, and employment, of these inhabitants of air, is finely fancied; into which several strokes of satire are thrown with great delicacy and address.

> Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
> And view with scorn two pages and a chair.

The transformation of women of different tempers into different kinds of spirits, cannot be too much applauded.

> † The sprites of fiery Termagants, in flame
> Mount up, and take a salamander's name.

Soft

* Cant. i. ver. 27. to ver. 114.

† These images have been lately expressed in Latin, with much purity and elegance; and deserve to be here inserted.

Mortua

Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
And sip with Nymphs, their elemental tea.
The graver Prude sinks downward to a gnome,
In search of mischief still on earth to roam.
The light Coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

The description of the * toilette, which succeeds, is judiciously given in such magnificent terms as dignify the offices performed at it. Belinda dressing, is painted in as pompous a manner as Achilles arming. The canto ends with a circumstance artfully contrived to keep this beautiful machinery

Mortua lascivum resoluta liquescit in ignem,
Aut abit in molles singula nympha notos:
Ætheriosque trahens haustus, tenuissima turba,
Versat ad æstivum lucida membra jubar.
Gaudet adhuc circum molles operosa puellas
Versari, et veneres suppeditare novas.
Curat uti dulces commendent oscula risus,
Purior ut sensim prodeat ore rubor:
Ne quatiat comptos animosior aura capillos,
Nec fædet pulcras pustula sæva genas:
Neve recens maculâ violetur purpura palli,
Excidat aut niveo pendula gemma sinu.
Corpora nympharum vacuas tenuentur in auras;
At studia in memori pectore prisca manent.
Carm. Quadrages. vol. ii. pag. 32. Oxon. 1748.

* Cant. i. ver. 121.

nery in the reader's eye: for after the poet has said, that the fair heroine

> Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
> And calls forth all the wonders of her face,*

He immediately subjoins,

> The busy sylphs surround their darling care;
> These set the head, and those divide the hair:
> Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
> And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

The mention of the LOCK,† on which the poem turns, is rightly reserved to the second canto. The sacrifice of the Baron to implore success to his undertaking, is another instance of our poet's judgment, in heightening the subject.‡ The succeeding scene of sailing upon the Thames is most gay and delightful, and impresses very pleasing pictures upon the imagination. Here, too, the machinery is again introduced with much propriety. Ariel summons his denizens of air, who

* Ver. 141. † Cant. ii. ver. 21.

‡ Ver. 37.

who are thus painted with a rich exuberance of fancy:

Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold:
Transparent forms, too thin for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light.
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glittering textures of the filmy dew,
Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
While every beam new transient colours flings;
Colours, that change whene'er they wave their wings.*

Ariel afterwards enumerates the functions and employments of the sylphs, in the following manner; where some are supposed to delight in more gross, and others in more refined, occupations.

Ye know the spheres and various tasks, assign'd
By laws eternal to th' aërial kind.
Some in the fields of purest æther play,
And bask and brighten in the blaze of day;
Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high,
Or roll the planets through the boundless sky;
Some, less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light,
Pursue the stars, that shoot across the night,

Or

* Ver. 59.

Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow,
Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain.*

Those who are fond of tracing images and sentiments to their source, may, perhaps, be inclined to think, that the hint of ascribing tasks and offices to such imaginary beings, is taken from the Fairies and the Ariel of Shakespeare: let the impartial critic determine which has the superiority of fancy. The employment of Ariel, in the TEMPEST, is said to be,

— — — To tread the ooze
Of the salt deep;
To run upon the sharp wind of the north;
To do—business in the veins of th' earth,
When it is bak'd with frost;
— — To dive into the fire; to ride
On the curl'd clouds.

And again,

— — In the deep nook, where once
Thou call'd'st me up at midnight, to fetch dew
From the still-vext Bermoothes.— — —

Nor

* Cant. ii. ver. 75.

Nor must I omit that exquisite song, in which his favourite and peculiar pastime is expressed.

Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly,
After sun-set, merrily:
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

With what wildness of imagination, but yet with what propriety, are the amusements of the fairies pointed out in the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: amusements proper for none but fairies!

— — 'Fore the third part of a minute, hence:
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds:
Some war with rear-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders
At our queint spirits. — — — — —

Shakespeare only could have thought of the following gratifications for Titania's lover; and they are fit only to be offered, to her lover, by a fairy-queen.

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey-bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise:
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes.

If it should be thought, that Shakespeare has the merit of being the first who assigned proper employments to imaginary persons in the foregoing lines, yet it must be granted, that by the addition of the most delicate satire to the most lively fancy, POPE, in the following passage, has excelled any thing in Shakespeare, or perhaps in any other author.

Our humbler province is to tend the fair;
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care;
To save the powder from too rough a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd essences exhale;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs,
To steal from rainbows, ere they drop in show'rs,
A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;
Nay, oft in dreams invention we bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.*

The

* Cant. ii. ver. 91.

The seeming importance given to every part of female dress, each of which is committed to the care and protection of a different sylph, with all the solemnity of a general appointing the several posts in his army, renders the following passage admirable, on account of its politeness, poignancy, and poetry.

Haste then, ye spirits, to your charge repair;
The fluttering fan be Zephyretta's care;
The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign;
And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine:
Do thou, Crispissa, tend the fav'rite lock:
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.*

The celebrated raillery of Addison on the hoop-petticoat, has nothing equal to the following circumstance; which marks the difficulty of guarding a part of dress of such high consequence.

To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge, the PETTICOAT:
Oft have we known that sevenfold fence to fail,
Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of whale:
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around.†

* Cant. ii. ver. 111. † Cant. ii. ver. 117.

RIDET HOC, INQUAM, VENUS IPSA; RIDENT
SIMPLICES NYMPHÆ, FERUS ET CUPIDO.

Our poet still rises in the delicacy of his satire, where he employs, with the utmost judgment and elegance, all the implements and furniture of the toilette, as instruments of punishment to those spirits who shall be careless of their charge: of punishment such as sylphs alone could undergo. Each of the delinquents

Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins;
Be stopp'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins;
Or plung'd in lakes of bitter washes lie;
Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye;
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,
While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain;
Or allum-styptics, with contracting pow'r,
Shrink his thin essence like a shrivel'd flow'r;
Or, as Ixion fix'd, the wretch shall feel
The giddy motion of the whirling mill;
In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
And tremble at the sea that froths below.*

If Virgil has merited such perpetual commendation for exalting his bees by the majesty and magnificence

* Cant. ii. ver. 125.

magnificence of his diction, does not POPE deserve equal praises for the pomp and lustre of his language on so trivial a subject?

The same mastery of language appears in the lively and elegant description of the game at Ombre, which is certainly imitated from the Scacchia of Vida, and as certainly equal to it, if not superior. Both of them have elevated and enlivened their subjects, by such similies as the epic poets use; but as Chess is a play of a far higher order than Ombre, POPE had a more difficult task than Vida, to raise this his inferior subject into equal dignity and gracefulness. Here again our poet artfully introduces his machinery:

> Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aërial guard
> Descend, and sit on each important card;
> First Ariel perch'd upon a mattadore.*

The majesty with which the kings of spades and clubs, and the knaves of diamonds and clubs, are spoken of, is very amusing to the imagination:

* Cant. iii. ver. 31.

tion: and the whole game is conducted with great art and judgment. I question whether Hoyle could have played it better than Belinda. It is finely contrived that she should be victorious; as it occasions a change of fortune in the dreadful loss she was speedily to undergo, and gives occasion to the poet to introduce a moral reflection from Virgil, which adds to the pleasantry of the story. In one of the passages where POPE has copied Vida, he has lost the propriety of the original, which arises from the different colours of the *men* at Chess.

Thus, when dispers'd a routed army runs, &c.*

Non aliter, campis legio se buxea utrinque
Composuit, duplici digestis ordine turmis,
Adversisque ambæ fulsere coloribus alæ;
Quam Gallorum acies, Alpino frigore lactea
Corpora, si tendant albis in prælia signis,
Auroræ populos contra, et Phæthonte perustos
Insano Æthiopas, et nigri Memnonis alas.†

To this scene succeeds the tea-table. It is, doubtless, as hard to make a coffee-pot shine in poetry as a plough: yet POPE has succeeded in giving

* Cant. iii. ver. 81. † Vidæ Scacchia Ludus, ver. 74, &c.

giving elegance to so familiar an object, as well as Virgil. The guardian spirits are again active, and importantly employed :

Strait hover round the fair her airy band ;*
Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd.

Then follows an instance of assiduity fancied with great delicacy :

Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.

But nothing can excel the behaviour of the sylphs, and their wakeful solicitude for their charge, when the danger grows more imminent, and the catastrophe approaches.

Swift to the Lock a thousand sprites repair.†

The methods by which they endeavoured to preserve her from the intended mischief, are such

* Cant. iii. ver. 113.

† It is remarkable that Madame de Sevigné has mentioned the sylphs as invisible attendants, and as interested in the affairs of the ladies, in the 101st, 104th, 195th, of her Letters.

only as could be executed by a sylph; and have therefore an admirable propriety, as well as the utmost elegance.

> A thousand wings by turns blow back the hair,*
> And thrice they TWITCH'D the diamond in her ear;
> Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.

Still farther to heighten the piece, and to preserve the characters of his machines to the last, just when the fatal † forfex was spread,

> Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd,‡
> A wretched sylph too fondly interpos'd;——
> Fate urg'd the sheers, and cut the sylph in twain,
> (But airy substance soon unites again.)——.

Which last line is an admirable parody on that passage of Milton, which, perhaps oddly enough, describes Satan wounded:

The

* Cant. iii. ver. 136.

† Observe the many periphrases, and uncommon appellations, POPE has used for *Scissars*, which would sound too vulgar,—"Fatal Engine,—"Forfex,—"Sheers,—"Meeting Points, &c."

‡ Cant. iii. ver. 149.

The griding sword, with discontinuous wound,
Pass'd thro' him; but th' ethereal substance clos'd,
Not long divisible.* — — — —

The parodies are some of the most exquisite parts of this poem. That which follows from the "Dum juga montis aper," of Virgil, contains some of the most artful strokes of satire, and the most poignant ridicule imaginable.

While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British fair,
As long as Atalantis shall be read,
Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
When numerous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
So long my honor, name, and praise, shall live.†

The introduction of frequent parodies on serious and solemn passages of Homer and Virgil, give much life and spirit to heroi-comic poetry. "Tu dors, Prelat? tu dors?" in Boileau, is the "Ευδεις Αλρεϊδη υιε" of Homer, and is full of

* Paradise Lost, Book vi. ver. 329.

† Cant. iii. ver. 163.

humour. The wife of the barber talks in the language of Dido in her expostulations to her Æneas, at the beginning of the second canto of the Lutrin. POPE'S parodies of the speech of Sarpedon, in Homer,* and of the description of Achilles's sceptre,† together with the scales of Jupiter, from Homer, Virgil, and Milton,‡ are judiciously introduced in their several places; are, perhaps, superior to those Boileau or Garth have used; and are worked up with peculiar pleasantry. The mind of the reader is engaged by novelty, when it so unexpectedly finds a thought, or object, it had been accustomed to survey in another form, suddenly arrayed in a ridiculous garb. A mixture of comic and ridiculous images, with serious and important ones, adds, also, no small beauty to this species of poetry. As in the following passages, where real and imaginary distresses are coupled together:

> Not youthful kings, in battle seiz'd alive;§
> Not scornful virgins, who their charms survive;
>
> Not

* Cant. v. ver. 9.

† Cant. iv. ver. 133.

‡ Cant. v. ver. 71.

§ Cant. iv. ver. 3.

Not ardent lovers, robb'd of all their bliss;
Not ancient ladies, when refus'd a kiss;
Not tyrants fierce, that unrepenting die;

Nay, to carry the climax still higher,

Not Cynthia, when her manteau's pinn'd awry,
E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair.

This is much superior to a similar passage in the Dispensary, which POPE might have in his eye:

At this the victors own such ecstacies,*
As Memphian priests if their Osiris sneeze;
Or champions with Olympic clangor fir'd;
Or simp'ring prudes, with spritely Nantz inspir'd;
Or Sultans, rais'd from dungeons to a crown;
Or fasting zealots, when the sermon's done.

These objects have no reference to Garth's subject, as almost all of POPE's have, in the passage in question, where some female foible is glanced at. In this same canto, the cave of SPLEEN, the pictures of her attendants, ILL-NATURE and AFFECTATION, the effects of the vapour that hung over her palace, the imaginary diseases she occasions,

* Cant. v. ad calc.

sions, the * speech of Umbriel, a gnome, to this malignant deity, the vial of female sorrows, the speech of Thalestris to aggravate the misfortune, the breaking the vial, with its direful effects, and the speech of the disconsolate Belinda; all these circumstances are poetically imagined, and are far superior to any of Boileau and Garth. How much in character is it for Belinda to mark a very dismal and solitary situation, by wishing to be conveyed

> Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,
> Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste Bohea.†

Nothing

* Especially when he adjures the goddess by an account of his services, Cant. iv. ver. 71.

> If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,
> Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds,
> Or caus'd suspicion where no soul was rude,
> Or discompos'd the head-dress of a prude,
> Or e'er to costive lap-dog gave disease——
> Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
> That single act gives half the world the spleen.

Nothing can equal this beautiful panegyric, but the satirical touches that go before.

† Cant. iv. ver. 155.

Nothing is more common in the poets, than to introduce omens as preceding some important and dreadful event. Virgil has strongly described those that preceded the death of Dido. The rape of Belinda's Lock must necessarily also be attended with alarming prodigies. With what exquisite satire are they enumerated!

> Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell;
> The tottering china shook without a wind.*

And still more to aggravate the direfulness of the impending evil,

> Nay, Poll sate mute, and Shock was most unkind!

The chief subject of the fifth and last canto, is the battle that ensues, and the endeavours of the ladies to recover the hair. This battle is described, as it ought to be, in very lofty and pompous terms: a game of romps was never so well dignified before. The weapons made use of are the most proper imaginable: the lightning of the ladies eyes, intolerable frowns, a pinch of snuff,

* Cant. iv. ver. 162.

snuff, and a bodkin. The machinery is not forgot:

> Triumphant Umbriel on a sconce's height,
> Clapp'd his glad wings, and sate to view the fight.*

Again, when the snuff is given to the Baron,

> The gnomes direct, to ev'ry atom just,
> The pungent grains of titillating dust.†

Boileau and Garth have also each of them enlivened their pieces with a mock-fight. But Boileau has laid the scene of his action in a neighbouring bookseller's shop, where the combatants encounter each other by chance. This conduct is a little inartificial; but has given the satirist an opportunity of indulging his ruling passion, the exposing the bad poets with which France at that time abounded. Swift's Battle of the Books, at the end of the Tale of a Tub, is evidently taken from this ‡ battle of Boileau, which is excellent in its kind. The fight of the physicians, in

* Cant. v. ver. 53. † Cant. v. ver. 83.

‡ Cant. v.

in the Dispensary, is one of its most shining parts. There is a vast deal of propriety, as well as pleasantry, in the weapons Garth has given to his warriors. They are armed, much in character, with caustics, emetics, and cathartics; with buckthorn, and steel-pills; with syringes, bed-pans, and urinals. The execution is exactly proportioned to the deadliness of such irresistible weapons; and the wounds inflicted are suitable to the nature of each different instrument said to inflict them.*

We are now arrived at the grand catastrophe of the poem: the invaluable Lock which is so eagerly sought, is irrecoverably lost! And here our poet has made a judicious use of that celebrated fiction of Ariosto, that all things lost on earth are treasured in the moon. How such a fiction can properly have place in an epic poem, it becomes the defenders of this agreeably extravagant writer to justify; but in a comic poem, it appears with grace and consistency. The whole passage in Ariosto is full of wit and satire; for wit and satire were, perhaps, the chief and characteristical

* Cant. v.

characteristical of the many striking excellencies of Ariosto.* In this repository in the lunar sphere, says the sprightly Italian, were to be found,

> Le lachrime, e i sospiri de gli amanti,
> L'inutil' tempo, che si perde a gioco,
> E l' otio lungo d'huomini ignoranti,
> Vani disegni, che non han mai loco,
> I vani desiderii sono tanti,
> Che la piu parte ingombra di quel loco,

Cio

* If this be thought too harsh a criticism on this justly celebrated Italian, I am ready to adopt the following opinion of a writer of taste and penetration.

"Ariosto pleases; but not by his monstrous and improbable fictions, by his bizarre mixture of the serious and comic styles, by the want of coherence in his stories, or by the continual interruptions in his narration. He charms by the force and clearness of his expression, by the readiness and variety of his inventions, and by his natural pictures of the passions, especially those of the gay and amorous kind. And however his faults may diminish our satisfaction, they are not able entirely to destroy it. Did our pleasure really arise from those parts of his poem which we denominate faults, this would be no objection to criticism in general; it would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blameable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults; let the pleasure which they produce be ever so unexpected and unaccountable." Hume's Four Dissertations. Diss. iv. p. 212. London, 1757.

Cio che in summa qua giu perdesti mai,
La su saltendo ritrovar potrai.*

It is very remarkable, that the poet had the boldness to place among these imaginary treasures, the famous deed of gift of Constantine to Pope Silvester. "If (says he) I may be allowed to say this,

Questo era il dono (se pero dir lece)
Che Constantino al buon Silvestre fece.

It may be observed in general, to the honour of the poets, both ancient and modern, that they have ever been some of the first who have detected and opposed the false claims, and mischievous usurpations, of superstition and slavery. Nor can this be wondered at, since these two are the greatest enemies, not only to all true happiness, but to all true genius.

The denouement, as a pedantic disciple of Bossu would call it, of this poem, is well conducted. What is become of this important Lock

OF

* Orlando Furioso. Cant. xxxiv.

OF HAIR? It is made a constellation with that of Berenice, so celebrated by Callimachus. As it rises to heaven,

> The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies,*
> And pleas'd pursue its progress through the skies.

One cannot sufficiently applaud the art of the poet, in constantly keeping in the reader's view, the machinery of the poem, to the very last. Even when the Lock is transformed, the sylphs, who had so carefully guarded it, are here once again artfully mentioned, as finally rejoicing in its honourable transformation.

In reading the Lutrin, I have always been struck with the impropriety of so serious a conclusion as Boileau has given to so ludicrous a poem. PIETY and JUSTICE are beings rather too awful to have any concern in the celebrated Desk. They appear as much out of place and season, as would the archbishop of Paris in his pontifical robes in an harlequin entertainment.

POPE

* Cant. v. ver. 131.

POPE does not desert his favourite Lock, even after it becomes a constellation; and the uses he assigns to it are, indeed, admirable, and have a reference to the subject of the poem:

> This the beau monde shall from the Mall survey,*
> And hail with music its propitious ray;
> This the blest lover shall for *Venus* take,
> And send up prayers from Rosamunda's lake;
> This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
> When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;
> And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom
> The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

This is at once, DULCE LOQUI, and RIDERE DECORUM.

Upon the whole, I hope it will not be thought an exaggerated panegyric to say, that the RAPE OF THE LOCK is the BEST SATIRE extant; that it contains the truest and liveliest picture of modern life; and that the subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted, than that of any other heroi-comic poem. POPE here appears in the light of a man of gallantry,

* Cant. v. ver. 133.

lantry, and of a thorough knowledge of the world; and, indeed, he had nothing, in his carriage and deportment, of that affected singularity, which has induced some men of genius to despise, and depart from, the established rules of politeness and civil life. For all poets have not practised the sober and rational advice of Boileau:

> Que les vers ne soient pas votre eternel emploi:
> Cultivez vos amis, soyez homme de foi.
> C'est peu d' etre agréable et charmant dans un livre;
> Il fait savoir encore, et converser, et vivre.*

Our nation can boast also, of having produced one or two more poems of the burlesque kind, that are excellent; particularly the SPLENDID SHILLING, that admirable copy of the solemn irony of Cervantes, who is the father and unrivalled model of the true mock-heroic: and the MUSCIPULA, written with the purity of Virgil, whom the author so perfectly understood, and with the pleasantry of Lucian: to which I cannot forbear adding, the SCRIBLERIAD of Mr. Cambridge,

* L'Art Poetique, Chant. iv.

Cambridge,* the MACHINÆ GESTICULANTES of Addison, the HOBBINOL of Somerville, and the TRIVIA of Gay.

If some of the most candid among the French critics begin to acknowledge, that they have produced nothing, in point of SUBLIMITY and MAJESTY, equal to the Paradise Lost, we may also venture to affirm, that, in point of DELICACY, ELEGANCE, and fine-turned RAILLERY, on which they have so much valued themselves, they have produced nothing equal to the RAPE OF THE LOCK. It is in this composition POPE principally

* This learned and ingenious writer hath made a new remark, in his preface, worth examination and attention. He says, that in first reading the *four* celebrated mock-heroic poems, he perceived they had all some radical defect. That at last he found, by a diligent perusal of Don Quixote, that *Propriety* was the fundamental excellence of that work. That all the *Marvellous* was reconcileable to *Probability*, as the author lead his hero into *that* species of absurdity only, which it was *natural* for an imagination heated with the continual reading of books of chivalry to fall into. That the want of attention to this, was the fundamental error of those poems. For with what PROPRIETY do *Churchmen*, *Physicians*, *Beaux*, and *Belles*, or *Booksellers*, in the Lutrin, Dispensary, Rape of the Lock, and Dunciad, address themselves to heathen Gods, offer sacrifices, consult oracles, or talk the language of Homer, and of the heroes of antiquity?

appears a POET, in which he has displayed more imagination than in all his other works taken together. It should, however, be remembered, that he was not the FIRST former and creator of those beautiful machines, the sylphs, on which his claim to imagination is chiefly founded. He found them existing ready to his hand; but has, indeed, employed them with singular judgment and artifice.

SECTION

SECTION V.

OF THE ELEGY TO THE MEMORY OF AN UNFORTUNATE LADY, THE PROLOGUE TO CATO, AND THE EPILOGUE TO JANE SHORE.

THE ELEGY *to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*, which is next to be spoken of, as it came from the heart, is very tender and pathetic; more so, I think, than any other copy of verses of our author. We are unacquainted with the whole of her history, and with that series of misfortunes which seems to have drawn on the melancholy catastrophe alluded to in the beginning of this ELEGY. She is said to be the same person to whom the Duke of Buckingham has addressed some lines, viz. "To a Lady designing to retire into a Monastery." This design is also hinted at in POPE'S Letters,* where he says, in a letter

 addressed,

* Vol. vii. p. 193. Octavo Edition.

addressed, I presume, to this very person, "If you are resolved, in revenge, to rob the world of so much example as you may afford it, I believe your design will be vain: for even in a monastery, your devotions cannot carry you so far towards the next world, as to make this lose sight of you: but you will be like a star, that, while it is fixed in heaven, shines over all the earth. Wheresoever Providence shall dispose of the most valuable thing I know, I shall ever follow you with my sincerest wishes; and my best thoughts will be perpetually waiting upon you, when you never hear of me or them. Your own guardian angels cannot be more constant, nor more silent."

This ELEGY opens with a striking abruptness, and a strong image; the poet fancies he beholds suddenly the phantom of his murdered friend:

> What beck'ning ghost along the moonlight shade,
> Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?
> 'Tis she!—But why that bleeding bosom gor'd?
> Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?

This

This question alarms the reader, and puts one in mind of that lively and affecting image in the prophecy of Isaiah, so vigorously conceived, that it places the object full in one's eyes: "Who is this that cometh from Edom? with dyed garments from Bosra?"* Akenside has begun one of his odes in the like manner;

> O fly! 'tis dire SUSPICION'S mien;
> And meditating plagues unseen,
> The sorc'ress hither bends!
> Behold her torch in gall imbru'd;
> Behold her garments drop with blood
> Of lovers and of friends!

The execrations on the cruelties of this lady's relations, which had driven her to this deplorable extremity, are very spirited and forcible; especially where the poet says emphatically,

> Thus, if eternal justice rules the ball,
> Thus shall your wives, and thus your children fall.

He describes afterwards the desolation of this family, by the following lively circumstance and prosopopœia:

* Chap. lxiii. ver. 1.

There passengers shall stand, and pointing say,
(While the long funerals blacken all the way,)
Lo! these were they whose souls the furies steel'd,
And curst with hearts unknowing how to yield!
So perish all whose breast ne'er learn'd to glow
For others good, or melt at others woe.

The incident of her dying in a country remote from her relations and acquaintance, is touched with great tenderness, and introduced with propriety, to aggravate and heighten her lamentable fate:

No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear,*
Pleas'd thy pale ghost, or grac'd thy mournful bier;
By foreign hands thy dying eyes were clos'd,
By foreign hands thy decent limbs compos'd,
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd!

The force of the repetition of the significant epithet *foreign*, need not be pointed out to any reader of sensibility. The right of sepulture, of which she was deprived from the manner of her death,

* Something like that pathetic stroke in the Philoctetes of Sophocles, who, among other heavy circumstances of distress, is said not to have near him, any συνίξοφον ομμα. Ver. 171.—Not to be translated.

death, is glanced at with great delicacy; nay, and a very poetical use is made of it:

> What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
> Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb,
> Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,
> And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast;
> There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
> There the first roses of the year shall blow.

If this ELEGY be so excellent, it may be ascribed to this cause, that the occasion of it was real; for it is certainly an indisputable maxim, "That nature is more powerful than fancy; that we can always feel more than we can imagine; and that the most artful fiction can give way to truth." When Polus, the celebrated actor, once affected his audience with more than ordinary emotions, it was "luctû et lamentis veris," by bursting out into real cries and tears; for in personating Electra weeping over the supposed urn of her brother Orestes, he held in his hand the real ashes of his own son lately dead.* Events that have actually happened, are, after all, the properest subjects for poetry. The best eclogue

* Aul. Gell. Noct. Attic. lib. vii. cap. v.

eclogue of Virgil,* the best ode of Horace,† are founded on real incidents. If we briefly cast our eyes over the most interesting and affecting stories, ancient or modern, we shall find that they are such, as, however adorned, and a little diversified, are yet grounded on true history, and on real matters of fact. Such, for instance, among the ancients, are the stories of Joseph, of Oedipus, the Trojan war and its consequences, of Virginia and the Horatii; such, among the moderns, are the stories of King Lear, the Cid, Romeo and Juliet, and Oroonoko. The series of events contained in these stories, seem far to surpass the utmost powers of human imagination. In the best-conducted fiction, some mark of improbability and incoherence will still appear.

I shall only add to these, a tale literally true, which the admirable DANTE has introduced in his Inferno, and which is not sufficiently known: I cannot recollect any passage, in any writer whatever, so truly pathetic. Ugolino, a Florentine Count, is giving the description of his being imprisoned with his children by the Archbishop

* The First.

† Ode xiii. lib. ii.

bishop Ruggieri. " The hour approached when we expected to have something brought us to eat. But, instead of seeing any food appear, * *I heard the doors of that horrible dungeon more closely barred.* I beheld my little children *in silence,* and could not weep. My heart was petrified! The little wretches wept; and my dear Anselm said, *Tu guardi si, padre: che hai? Father, you look on us! what ails you?* I could neither weep nor answer, and continued swallowed up in silent agony all that day, and the following night, even till the dawn of day. As soon as a glimmering ray darted through the doleful prison, that I could view *again those four faces, in which my own image was impressed, I gnawed both my hands* with grief and rage. My children believing I did this through eagerness to eat, raising themselves suddenly up, said to me, *My father! our torments would be less, if you would allay the rage of your hunger upon us.* I restrained myself, that I might

* It was thought not improper to distinguish the more moving passages by Italics. Sir Joshua Reynolds, whose mind is stored with great and exalted ideas, has lately shewn, by a picture on this subject, how qualified he is to preside at a Royal Academy, and that he has talents that ought not to be confined to portrait-painting.

I might not encrease their misery. *We were all mute that day, and the following.* Quel di, e l' altro, stemmo tutti muti. The fourth day being come,* Gaddo, falling extended at my feet, cried, *Padre mio, che non m' ajuti! My father, why do you not help me?* and died. The other three expired one after the other, between the fifth and sixth day, famished, as thou seest me now! And I, *being seized with blindness,* began to go *groping upon them with my hands and feet;* and continued calling them by their *names three days* after they were dead. *E tre di li chiamai poiche fur morti:* then *hunger vanquished my grief!*"

If this inimitable description had been found in Homer, the Greek tragedies, or Virgil, how many commentaries and panegyrics would it have given rise to? What shall we say, or think, of the genius able to produce it? Perhaps the Inferno of Dante is the next composition to the Iliad, in point of originality and sublimity. And with

* Mr. Richardson was the first that gave an English translation in blank verse of this passage of Dante, in his book, entitled a Discourse on the Dignity of the Science of a Connoisseur. London 1719. page 30.

with regard to the Pathetic, let this tale stand a testimony of his abilities: for my own part, I truly believe it was never carried to a greater height. It is remarkable, that Chaucer appears to have been particularly struck with this tale in Dante, having highly commended this, "grete poete of Italie," for this narration; with a summary of which he concludes the Monke's Tale.*

The PROLOGUE to *Addison's Tragedy of Cato*, is superior to any prologue of Dryden; who, notwithstanding, is so justly celebrated for this species of writing. The prologues of Dryden are satirical and facetious; this of POPE is solemn and

* Milton was particularly fond of this writer. The following passage is curious, and has not been taken notice of by the late writers of his life: "Ego certè istis utrisque linguis non extremis tantummodò labris madidus; sed siquis alius, quantum per annos licuit, poculis majoribus prolutus, possum tamen nonnunquam ad illum DANTEM, et Petrarcham, aliosque vestros complusculos, libenter & cupidè comessatum ire. Nec me tam ipsæ Athenæ Atticæ cum illo suo pellucido Ilisso, nec illa vetus Roma suâ Tiberis ripâ retinere valuerunt, quin sæpe Arnum vestrum, & Fæsulanos illos Colles invisere amem. Milton. EPISTOL. Epist. viii. B. Bommathæo Florentino. MICHAEL ANGELO, from a similarity of genius, was fond of Dante. Both were great masters in the *Terrible*. M. Angelo made a *Bas-relief* on this subject, which I have seen.

and sublime, as the subject required. Those of Dryden contain general topics of criticism and wit, and may precede any play whatsoever, even tragedy or comedy. This of POPE is particular, and appropriated to the tragedy alone which it was designed to introduce. The most striking images and allusions it contains, are taken, with judgment, from some passages in the life of Cato himself. Such is that fine stroke, more lofty than any thing in the tragedy itself, where the poet says, that when Cæsar, amid the pomp and magnificence of a triumph,

> Shew'd Rome her Cato's figure drawn in state;
> As her dead father's reverend image past,
> The pomp was darken'd, and the day o'ercast;
> The triumph ceas'd. Tears gush'd from ev'ry eye,
> The world's great victor pass'd unheeded by;
> Her last good man dejected Rome ador'd,
> And honour'd Cæsar's less than Cato's sword.

Such, again, is the happy allusion to an old story mentioned in Martial, of this sage going into the theatre, and immediately coming out of it again:

> Such plays alone should win a British ear,
> As Cato's self had not disdain'd to hear.

From which he draws an artful panegyric on the purity and excellence of the play he was celebrating.

With respect to sprightly turns, and poignancy of wit, the prologues of Dryden have not been equalled. Many, and, indeed, the most excellent of them, were written on occasion of the players going to Oxford; a custom which was introduced by that polite scholar, and sensible governor, Dr. Ralph Bathurst, Dean of Wells, and President of Trinity College, while he was Vice-Chancellor of that University.* At this time Dryden was so famous for his prologues, that no piece was relished, nor would the theatres scarcely venture to produce it, if it wanted this fashionable ornament. To this purpose, an anecdote is recorded of Southerne; who, on bringing his first play on the stage, did not fail to bespeak a prologue of the artist in vogue. The usual price had been four guineas. In the present case, Dryden insisted that he must have six for his work; "which (said the mercantile bard) is

* See the Life, &c. of BATHURST, lately published.

is out of no disrespect to you, young man; but the players have had my goods too cheap."

The tragedy of Cato itself is a glaring instance of the force of party;* so sententious and declamatory a drama would never have met with such rapid and amazing success, if every line and sentiment had not been particularly tortured, and applied to recent events, and the reigning disputes of the times. The purity and energy of the diction, and the loftiness of the sentiments, copied in a great measure from Lucan, Tacitus, and Seneca the philosopher, merit approbation,

* When Addison spake of the secretary of state at that time, he always called him, in the language of Shakespeare, "*That canker'd Bolingbroke.*" Notwithstanding this, Addison assured POPE, he did not bring his tragedy on the stage with any party views; nay, desired POPE to carry the poem to the Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke for their perusal. The play, however, was always considered as a warning to the people, that liberty was in danger during that Tory ministry. To obviate the strong impressions that so popular a performance might make on the minds of the audience, Lord Bolingbroke, in the midst of their violent applauses, sent for Booth, who played Cato, one night, into his box, between the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas; in acknowledgment, as he expressed it with great address, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator.

approbation. But I have always thought, that those pompous Roman sentiments are not so difficult to be produced as is vulgarly imagined; and which, indeed, dazzle only the vulgar. A stroke of nature is, in my opinion, worth a hundred such thoughts as

> When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
> The post of honour is a private station.

CATO is a fine dialogue on liberty, and the love of one's country; but considered as a dramatic performance, nay, as a model of a just tragedy, as some have affectedly represented it, it must be owned to want ACTION and PATHOS; the two hinges, I presume, on which a just tragedy ought necessarily to turn, and without which it cannot subsist. It wants also CHARACTER, although that be not so essentially necessary to a tragedy as ACTION. Syphax, indeed, in his * interview with Juba, bears some marks of a rough African: the speeches of the rest may be transferred to any of the personages concerned. The simile drawn from Mount Atlas, and the de-

* Act. ii. Scene v.

scription of the Numidian traveller smothered in the desert, are, indeed, in character, but sufficiently obvious. How Addison could fall into the false and unnatural custom of ending his three first acts with similies, is amazing in so chaste and correct a writer. The loves of Juba and Marcia, of Portius and Lucia, are vicious and insipid episodes, debase the dignity, and destroy the unity, of the fable.

One would imagine, from the practice of our modern play-wrights, that love was the only passion capable of producing any great calamities in human life: for this passion has engrossed, and been impertinently introduced into, all subjects.* In the Cinna of Corneille, which the prince

* When the resolution of Medea to kill her children, is almost disarmed and destroyed by looking at them, and by their smiling upon her, she breaks out

Φευ, φευ' τι προσδερκεσθε μ'ομμασιν, τεκνα;
Τι προσγελαῖτε τον πανυσταῖον γελων;
Αι, αι—τι δρασω;—καρδια γαρ οιχεται,

Heu,

prince of Condé called "the Breviary of kings," Maximus whines like a shepherd in the Pastor Fido, even in the midst of profound political reflections, that equal those of Tacitus and Machiavel; and while the most important event that could happen to the empire of the world was debating. In his imitation of the Electra of Sophocles, Crebillon has introduced a frigid love intrigue. Achilles must be in love in the Iphigenia of Racine; and the rough Mithridates must be involved in this universal passion. A passion, however, it is, that will always shine upon the stage, where it is introduced as the chief subject, but not subordinate and secondary.* Thus, perhaps, there cannot be finer

 subjects

Heu, heu! cur me oculis aspicitis, liberi?
Cur arridetis hoc extremo risû?
Heu, heu! quid faciam? cor enim mihi disperit!
Euripid. Medea. Ver. 1041.

No sentiments of the Lover can be so tender, and so deeply touching, as these of the Mother.

* L'Amour furieux, criminel, malheureux, suivi de remords, arrache de nobles larmes. Point de milieu: il faut, ou que l'amour domine en tiran, ou qu'il ne paroisse pas.
Oeuvres de Voltaire. Tom. xii. page 153.

I have just been told, that CHATEAUBRUN also very lately made poor Philoctetes in love in his Desert Island.

subjects for a drama, than Phædra, Romeo, Othello, and Monimia. The whole distress in these pieces arises *singly* from this unfortunate passion, carried to an extreme.* The GREATER passions were the constant subjects of the Grecian; the TENDERER passions of the French and English theatres. Terror reigned in the former; pity occupies the latter. The moderns may yet boast of some pieces, that are not emasculated with this epidemical effeminacy. Racine was at last convinced of its impropriety, and gave the public his admirable Athalia; in which were no parts, commonly called by the French, d'amoreux & de l'amoreuse, which parts were always given to their two capital actors. The Merope, Mahomet, and Orestes, of Voltaire, are likewise free from any ill-placed tenderness, and romantic gallantry; for which he has merited the praises of the learned father Tournemine, in a letter to his

* The introduction of female actresses on the modern stage, together with that importance which the ladies in these latter ages have justly gained, in comparison to what the ancients allowed them, are the two great reasons, among others, of the prevalence of these tender tales. The ladies of Athens had not interest or abilities enough to damn a piece of Sophocles or Euripides.

his friend father Brumoy.* But LEAR and MACBETH are also striking instances what interesting tragedies may be written, without having recourse to a love-story. It is pity that the tragedy of Cato, in which all the rules of the drama, as far as the mechanism of writing reaches, are observed, is not exact with respect to the unity of time. There was no occasion to extend the time of the fable longer than the mere representation takes up; all might have passed in the compass of three hours from the morning, with a description of which the play opens; if the poet, in the fourth scene of the fifth act, had not talked of the *setting* sun playing on the armour of the soldiers.

Having been imperceptibly led into this little criticism on the tragedy of Cato, I beg leave to speak a few words on some other of Addison's pieces. The † first of his poems, addressed to

 Dryden,

* Les Oeuvres de Voltaire, tom. viii. 38.

† Tickel has ridiculously marked the author's age to be but twenty-two and twenty-seven; as if these verses were extraordinary efforts at that age! To these, however, Addison owed his introduction at court, and his acquaintance with that polite patron, Lord Somers.

Dryden, Sir John Somers, and King William, are languid, prosaic, and void of any poetical imagery or spirit. The Letter from Italy is by no means equal to a subject fruitful of genuine poetry, and which might have warmed the most cold and correct imagination. One would have expected, a young traveller, in the height of his genius and judgment, would have broke out into some strokes of enthusiasm. With what flatness and unfeelingness has he spoken of statuary and painting! Raphaël never received a more flegmatic eulogy. The slavery and superstition of the present Romans, are well touched upon towards the conclusion; but I will venture to name a little piece on a parallel subject, that excels this celebrated Letter; and in which is much lively and original imagery, strong painting, and manly sentiments of freedom. It is a copy of verses written at Virgil's Tomb, and printed in Dodsley's * Miscellanies.

That there are many well-wrought descriptions, and even pathetic strokes, in the Campaign, it would be stupidity and malignity to deny. But surely

* Vol. iv. page 114.

surely the regular march which the poet has observed from one town to another, as if he had been a commissary of the army, cannot well be excused. There is a passage in Boileau, so remarkably applicable to this fault of Addison, that one would almost be tempted to think he had the Campaign in his eye, when he wrote it, if the time would admit * it.

> Loin ces rimeurs craintifs, dont l'esprit phlegmatique
> Garde dans ses fureurs un ordre didactique;
> Qui chantant d'un heros les progrés éclatans,
> MAIGRES HISTORIENS, SUIVRONT L'ORDRE DES TEMPS;
> Ils n'osent un moment prendre un sujet de vüe,
> Pour prendre Dole, il faut que Lille soit rendüe;
> Et que leur vers exact, ainsi que Mezerai,
> Ait fait déja tomber—les remparts de † Coutrai.

The most spirited verses Addison has written, are, an Imitation of the Third Ode of the Third Book of Horace, which is, indeed, performed with energy and vigour; and his compliment

* But the Art of Poetry was written in the year 1672, many years before the Campaign. Addison might have profited by this rule of his acquaintance, for whom he had a great respect.

† L'Art poetique. Ch. ii.

to Kneller, on the Picture of King George the First. The occasion of this last poem is peculiarly happy; for among the works of Phidias, which he enumerates, he selects such statues as exactly mark, and characterise, the last six British kings and queens.

* Great Pan, who wont to chase the fair,
And lov'd the spreading OAK, was there;
Old Saturn too, with upcast eyes,
Beheld his ABDICATED skies;
And mighty Mars, for war renown'd,
In adamantine armour frown'd:
By him the childless goddess rose,
Minerva, studious to compose
Her twisted threads; the web she strung,
And o'er a loom of marble hung.
Thetis, the troubled ocean's queen,
Match'd with a MORTAL, next was seen,
Reclining on a funeral urn,
Her short-liv'd darling son to mourn.
The last was HE whose thunder slew
The Titan race, a rebel crew,
That from a HUNDRED HILLS ally'd,
In impious league their king defy'd.

There

* CHARLES II. famous for his lewdness: the allusion to his being concealed in the oak is artful. JAMES II. WILLIAM III. Queen MARY, who had no heirs, and was a great work-woman. Queen ANNE, married to the PRINCE of Denmark, who lost the D. of Gloucester in his youth. GEORGE I. who conquered the Highland rebels at Preston, 1715.

There is scarcely, I believe, any instance, where mythology has been applied with more delicacy and dexterity, and has been contrived to answer, in its application, so minutely, exactly, in so many corresponding circumstances. There are various passages in the opera of Rosamond, that deserve to be mentioned as beautiful; and the versification of this piece is particularly musical.

Whatever censures we have here too boldly, perhaps, ventured to deliver on the *professed* poetry of Addison, yet must we candidly own, that in various parts of his Prose Essays, are to be found many strokes of genuine and sublime poetry; many marks of a vigorous and exuberant imagination. Particularly, in the noble allegory of Pain and Pleasure, the Vision of Mirza, the story of Maraton and Yaratilda, of Constantia and Theodosius, and the beautiful eastern tale of Abdallah and Balsora; and many others: together with several strokes in the Essay on the Pleasures of Imagination. It has been the lot of many great names, not to have been able to express themselves with beauty and propriety in the fetters of verse, in their respective languages, who

who have yet manifested the force, fertility, and creative power, of a most poetic genius in prose.* This was the case of Plato, of Lucian, of Fenelon, of Sir Philip Sidney, and Dr. T. Burnet, who, in his Theory of the Earth, has displayed an imagination very nearly equal to that of Milton:

> ——————Mœnia mundi
> Discedunt! totum video per Inane geri res!

After all, the chief and characteristical excellency of Addison, was his HUMOUR; for in humour no mortal has excelled him, except Moliere. Witness the character of Sir Roger de Coverley, so original, so natural, and so inviolably preserved; particularly in the month which the Spectator spends at his hall in the country.† Witness also the

* In some of the eastern stories, lately published in the ADVENTURER, much invention is displayed; and this too by an author, that, I have never heard, has written any considerable verses. See, particularly, the story of Amurath, N°. 20, of Nouraddin and Amana, N°. 73, and of Carazan, N°. 132, by Mr. Hawkesworth.

† Vol. II. during the month of July. See the characters of Will. Wimble, Moll White, and the Justices of the Quorum,

the Drummer, that excellent and neglected comedy, that just picture of life and real manners, where the poet never speaks in his own person, or totally drops or forgets a character, for the sake of introducing a brilliant simile, or acute remark: where no train is laid for wit; no JEREMYS, or BENS, are suffered to appear.

The EPILOGUE to *Jane Shore* is the last piece that belongs to this Section; the title of which by this time the reader may have possibly forgot. It is written with that air of gallantry and raillery, which, by a strange perversion of taste, the audience expects in all epilogues to the most serious and pathetic pieces. To recommend cuckoldom, and palliate adultery, is their usual intent. I wonder Mrs. Oldfield was not suffered to speak it; for it is superior to that which was used on the occasion. In this taste Garrick has written some, that abound in spirit and drollery. Rowe's

rum, p. 200, & seq. And Vol. v. Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey, 329. and particularly at the tragedy of the Distrest Mother with the Spectator.

Rowe's genius* was rather delicate and soft, than strong and pathetic; his compositions sooth us with a tranquil and tender sort of complacency, rather than cleave the heart with pangs of commiseration. His distresses are entirely founded on the passion of love. His diction is extremely elegant and chaste, and his versification† highly melodious. His plays are declamations rather than dialogues; and his characters are general, and undistinguished from each other. Such a furious character as that of Bajazet is easily drawn; and, let me add, easily acted. There is a want of unity in the fable of Tamerlane. The death's head, dead body, and stage hung in mourning, in the Fair Penitent, are artificial and mechanical methods of affecting an audience. In

* There are, however, some images in Rowe strongly painted; such, particularly, as the following, which is worthy of Spenser; speaking of the *Tower*.

> Methinks SUSPICION and DISTRUST dwell here,
> *Staring* with *meagre* forms thro' *grated* windows.
> Lady Jane Grey, Act ii. Sc. ii.

† He has translated Lucan with force and spirit. It is undoubtedly one of the best translations in the English language, and seems not to be sufficiently valued.

In a word, his plays are musical and pleasing poems; but inactive and unmoving tragedies. This of Jane Shore is, I think, the most interesting and affecting of any he has given us: but probability is sadly violated in it, by the neglect of the unity of time. For a person to be supposed to be starved during the representation of five acts, is a striking instance of the absurdity of this violation. In this piece, as in all of Rowe, are many florid speeches, utterly inconsistent with the state and situation of the distressful personages who speak them. When Shore first meets with her husband, she says,

> * Art thou not risen by miracle from death?
> Thy shroud is fallen from off thee, and the grave
> Was bid to give thee up, that thou might'st come,
> The messenger of grace and goodness to me.—

He has then added some lines, intolerably flowery and unnatural:

> Give me your drops, ye soft descending rains,
> Give me your streams, ye never-ceasing springs,
> That my sad eyes may still supply my duty,
> And feed an everlasting flood of sorrow.

This

* Act. v. Sc. v.

This is of a far distant strain from those tender and simple exclamations she uses when her husband offers her some rich conserves:

——————— * How can you be so good?

And again,

——————— Have you forgot
That costly string of pearl you brought me home,
And ty'd about my neck? *How could I leave you?*

She continues to gaze on him with earnestness, and, instead of eating, as he entreats her, she observes,

——————— You're strangely alter'd—
Say, gentle Belmour, is he not? How pale
Your visage is become! Your eyes are hollow!
Nay, you are wrinkled too—

To which she instantly subjoins, struck with the idea that she herself was the unhappy cause of this alteration,

——————— Alas, the day!
My wretchedness has cost you many a tear,
And many a bitter pang since last we parted.

What

* Act. v. Sc. v.

What she answers to her husband, when he asks her movingly,

> Why dost thou fix thy dying eyes upon me
> With such an earnest, such a piteous look,
> As if thy heart was full of some sad meaning
> Thou could'st not speak?

is pathetic to a great degree;

> Forgive me! *but* forgive me!

These few words far exceed the most pompous declamations of *Cato*. The interview betwixt Jane Shore and Alicia, in the middle of this act, is also very affecting; where the madness of Alicia is well painted. But of all representations of madness, that of Clementina, in the history of Sir Charles Grandison, is the most deeply interesting. I know not whether even the madness of Lear is wrought up, and expressed by so many little strokes of nature, and genuine passion. Shall I say it is pedantry to prefer and compare the madness of Orestes, in Euripides, to this of Clementina?

It

It is probable that this is become the most popular and pleasing tragedy of all Rowe's works, because it is founded on our own history. I cannot forbear wishing that our writers would more frequently search for subjects in the annals of England, which afford many striking and pathetic events proper for the stage. We have been too long attached to Grecian and Roman stories. In truth, the DOMESTICA FACTA are more interesting, as well as more useful: more interesting, because we all think ourselves concerned in the actions and fates of our countrymen: more useful, because the characters and manners bid the fairest to be true and natural, when they are drawn from models with which we are exactly acquainted. The Turks, the Persians, and Americans, of our poets, are, in reality, distinguished from Englishmen only by their turbans and feathers; and think, and act, as if they were born and educated within the bills of mortality. The historical plays of * Shakespeare are always particularly

* Milton has left, in a manuscript, thirty-three subjects for tragedies, all taken from the English annals; which manuscript

ticularly grateful to the spectator, who loves to see and hear our own Harrys and Edwards, better than all the Achilleses or Cæsars that ever existed. In the choice of a domestic story, however, much judgment and circumspection must be exerted, to select one of a proper æra; neither of too ancient, or of too modern a date. The manners of times very ancient, we shall be apt to falsify, as those of the Greeks and Romans. And recent events, with which we are thoroughly acquainted, are deprived of the power of impressing solemnity and awe, by their notoriety and familiarity. Age softens and wears away all those disgracing and depreciating circumstances which attend modern transactions, merely becaus they are modern. Lucan was much embarrassed by the proximity of the times he treated of. On this very account, as well as others, the best tragedy that could be possibly written on the murder of Charles I. would be coldly received. Racine ventured to write on a recent history, in

script the curious reader may see printed in Newton's Edit. of Milton, Oct. Vol. iii. pag. 331. And in Birch's Life of Milton, prefixed to his edition of Milton's Prose Works, pag. 51; and in Peck's Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Milton, pag. 90.

his Bajazet; but would not have attempted it, had he not thought that the distance of his hero's country repaired, in some measure, the nearness of the time in which he lived. "Major a longinquo reverentia."

POPE, it is said, had framed a design of writing an epic poem on a fact recorded in our old annalists, and therefore more engaging to an Englishman; on the ARRIVAL of BRUTUS, the supposed grandson of Æneas, in our island, and the settlement of the first foundations of the British monarchy. A full scope might have been given to a vigorous imagination, to embellish a fiction drawn from the bosom of the remotest antiquity. Some tale, equally venerable and ancient, it was also the purpose of Milton* to adorn; for he says, in his Reason of Church

* Whether he intended, as A POET expresses it, To

Record old ARTHUR's magic tale,
And EDWARD fierce, in sable mail;
Sing royal BRUTUS' lawless doom,
And brave BONDUCA, scourge of Rome;
Great PENDRAGON's fair-branched line,
Stern ARVIRAGE, or old LOCRINE.

THE UNION, pag. 92.

"An

Church Government,* "I am meditating what king or knight BEFORE THE CONQUEST might be chosen, in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero." But shall I be pardoned for suspecting, that POPE would not have succeeded in his design; that so DIDACTIC a genius would have been deficient in that SUBLIME and PATHETIC, which are the main nerves of the epopea; that he would have given us many elegant descriptions, and many GENERAL characters, well drawn;

 but

"An heroical poem (says Milton, in the above-mentioned manuscript) may be founded somewhere in Alfred's reign, especially at his issuing out of Edelingsey, on the Danes, whose actions are well like those of Ulysses." In Milton's History of England may be seen the story of Brutus here in question; with which he seems pleased, as it suited the romantic turn of his mind. See his MANSUS.

Siquando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges,
Arthurumque etiam, &c.
Ipse ego Dardanias Rutupina per æquora puppes,
Dicam, & Pandrasidos regnum vetus Inogeniæ,
Brennumque, Arviragumque, &c.

And, particularly, the EPITAPHIUM DAMONIS.

* Pag. 24.

but would have failed to set before our eyes the REALITY of these objects, and the ACTIONS of these characters: for Homer professedly draws no characters, but gives us to collect them from the looks and behaviour of each person he introduces; that POPE's close and constant reasoning had impaired and crushed the faculty of imagination; that the political reflections, in this piece, would, in all probability, have been more numerous than the affecting strokes of nature; that it would have more resembled the HENRIADE than the ILIAD, or even the GIERUSALEMME LIBERATA; that it would have appeared (if this scheme had been executed) how much, and for what reasons, the man that is skilful in painting modern life, and the most secret foibles and follies of his contemporaries, is, THEREFORE, disqualified for representing the ages of heroism, and that simple life, which alone epic poetry can gracefully describe; in a word, that this composition would have shewn more of the PHILOSOPHER than of the POET. Add to all this, that it was to have been written in rhyme;* a circum-

* Since this was said, it has appeared, that POPE intended to have written this poem in blank verse.

a circumstance sufficient of itself alone to overwhelm and extinguish all enthusiasm, and produce endless tautologies and circumlocutions. Are not these suppositions strengthened by what Dr. Warburton* has informed us, namely, that POPE, in this poem, intended to have treated amply "Of ALL that regarded civil regimen, or the science of politics; that the several forms of a republic were here to be examined and explained; together with the several modes of religious worship, as far forth as they affect society;" than which, surely, there could not have been a more improper subject for an epic poem.

It is not impertinent to observe, for the sake of those who are fond of the history of literature, and of the human mind in the progress of it, that the very first poem that appeared in France, any thing like an epic poem, was on this identical subject, of Brutus arriving in England. It was written by Master EUSTACHE, so early as in the reign of Louis the Seventh, surnamed the Young, who ascended the throne in the year 1137, and who was the husband of the celebrated

* Vol. III.

Eleonora, afterwards divorced, and married to our Henry the Second. The author called it, Le ROMAN de Brut. Every piece of poetry was at that time denominated a romance. The Latin language ceased to be regularly spoken in France about the ninth century; and was succeeded by what was called the *Romance*-tongue, a mixture of the language of the Francs, and of bad Latin. The species of writing, called *Romans*, began in the tenth century, according to the opinion of the Benedictine fathers,* who have well refuted M. Fleuri and Calmet, who make it less ancient by two hundred years. The poem, or *Roman*, we are speaking of, is full of wonderful and improbable tales, and supernatural adventures, suited to the taste of so barbarous an age. It is matter of some curiosity, to see a specimen of the style of this eldest of the French poets. This is his exordium:

Qui veut ouir, qui veut scavoir,
De roi en roi, & d' hoir en hoir,
Qui cils furent, & d' où cils vinrent,
Qui Angleterre primes tinrent.

We

* Hist. Lit. T. 6, 7.

We may judge, from this passage, of the state of the language. Master Eustache has been particularly careful to mark the time in which he lived and wrote, by his two concluding lines:

L'an mil cent cinquante—cinq ans
Fit Maistre Eustache ces Romans.

I will take leave to add, that the second poem, now remaining, in the French language, was entitled, The Romance of Alexander the Great. It was the confederated work of four authors, famous in their time. Lambert le Court, and Alexander of Paris, sung the exploits of Alexander; Peter de Saint Clost, wrote his will in verse; the writing the will of a hero being then a common topic; and John le Nivelois added a book concerning the manner in which his death was revenged. It is remarkable, that before this time, all the *Romans* had been composed in verses of eight syllables; but in this piece, the four authors first used verses of TWELVE syllables, as more solemn and majestic. And this was the origin, though but little known, of those verses

which we now call ALEXANDRINES, the French heroic measure; the name being derived from Alexander, the hero of the piece, or from Alexander, the most celebrated of the four poets concerned in this work. These were the most applauded poets of that age. Fauchet highly commends this poem; particularly a passage where a Cavalier is struck to the ground with a lance, who, says the old bard,

Du long comme il etoit, mesura la campagne.

Which is not inferior to Virgil's

Hesperiam metire jacens.—

One would not imagine this line had been written so early as the middle of the twelfth century. A great and truly learned antiquary has remarked, for the honour of our country, that about this time, 1160, appeared the first traces of any theatre. "A monk called Geoffry, who was afterwards abbot of St. Alban's in England, employed in the education of youth, made his pupils

pupils represent, with proper scenes and dresses, tragedies of piety. The subject of the first dramatic piece; was the miracles of saint Catharine, which appeared long before any of our representations of the MYSTERIES.*

SECTION

* The president Henault, Histoire de France. Tom. I. p. 151. a Paris 1749.

SECTION VI.

OF THE EPISTLE OF SAPPHO TO PHAON, AND OF ELOISA TO ABELARD.

IT is no small merit in Ovid, to have invented * this beautiful species of writing epistles under feigned characters. It is a high improvement on the Greek elegy; to which its dramatic nature renders it greatly superior. It is, indeed, no other than a passionate soliloquy, in which the mind gives vent to the distresses and emotions under which it labours: but, by being directed and addressed to a particular person, it gains a degree of propriety, that the best conducted soliloquy in a tragedy must ever want. Our impatience under any pressures of grief, and

* Propertius, however, has one composition of this sort, entitled, Epistola Arethusæ ad Lycotam. Lib. iv. Eleg. 3. Vulpius observes, that Horace never once mentions Propertius with approbation, but glances at him with ridicule in the passage, Quis nisi Callimachus. Ep. 2. L. 2. v. 100.

and disorder of mind, makes such passionate expostulations with the persons supposed to cause such uneasinesses, very natural. Judgment is chiefly shewn, by opening the interesting complaint just at such a period of time, as will give occasion for the most tender sentiments, and the most sudden and violent turns of passion, to be displayed. Ovid may, perhaps, be blamed for a sameness of subjects in these epistles of his heroines, whose distresses are almost all occasioned by their lovers forsaking them. His epistles are likewise too long; which circumstance has forced him into a repetition and languor in the sentiments. It would be a pleasing task, and conduce to the formation of a good taste, to shew how differently Ovid, and the Greek tragedians, have made Medea, Phædra, and Deianira speak, on the very same occasions. Such a comparison would abundantly manifest the FANCY and WIT of Ovid, and the JUDGMENT and NATURE of Euripides and Sophocles. If the character of Medea was not better supported in the tragedy which Ovid is said to have produced, and of which Quintilian speaks so advantageously,

vantageously, than it is in her epistle to Jason, one may venture to declare, that the Romans would not yet have been vindicated from their inferiority to the Greeks in tragic poesy.

The Epistle before us is translated by POPE, with faithfulness, and with elegance, and much excels any that Dryden translated in the volume he published; several of which were done by some "of the mob of gentlemen that wrote with ease;" that is, Sir C. Scroop, Caryl, Pooly, Wright, Tate, Buckingham, Cooper, and other careless rhymers. A good translation of these epistles is as much wanted as one of Juvenal; for, out of sixteen satires of that poet, Dryden himself translated but six. We can now boast of happy translations in verse, of almost all the great poets of antiquity; whilst the French have been poorly contented with only prose translations of Homer and Horace, which, says Cervantes, can no more resemble the original, than the wrong side of tapestry can represent the right. The inability of the French tongue to express many Greek or Roman ideas with facility and grace, is here visible;

visible; but the Italians have Horace translated * by Pallavacini; Theocritus, by Ricolotti and Salvini; Ovid, by Anguillara; the Æneid, admirably well, in blank verse, by Annibal Caro; and the Georgics, in blank verse also, by Daniello; and Lucretius, by Marchetti.

I return to Ovid, by observing, that he has put into the mouth of his heroine, a greater number of pretty panegyrical epigrams, than of those tender and passionate sentiments which suited her character, and made her sensibility in amours so famous. What can be more elegantly gallant than this compliment to Phaon?

Sume fidem & pharetram; fies manifestus Apollo;
Accedant capiti cornua; Bacchus eris.

This thought seems indisputably to have been imitated in that most justly celebrated of modern epigrams,

Lumine

* The Spaniards have the Odyssey of Homer translated in verse by G. Perez. The Medea of Euripides by P. Abril. Parts of Pindar by L. de Leon, and of Theocritus by Villegas. The Eclogues of Virgil by I. Encina. The Georgics, in blank verse, by I. de Guzman. The Æneid by L. de Leon, published by Quevedo, 1631.

Lumine Acon dextro, capta est Leonilla sinistro,
Et potis est forma vincere uterque Deos;
Blande puer, lumen quod habes, concede sorori.
Sic tu cœcus AMOR, sic erit illa VENUS.

My chief reason for quoting these delicate lines, was to point out the occasion of them, which seems not to be sufficiently known. They were made on Louis de Maguiron, the most beautiful man of his time, and the great favourite of Henry III. of France, who lost an eye at the siege of Issoire; and on the Princess of Eboli, a great beauty, but who was deprived of the sight of one of her eyes, and who was at the same time mistress of Philip II. King of Spain.

It was happily imagined, to write an epistle in the character of Sappho, who had spoken of love with more warmth and feeling than any writer of antiquity; and who described the violent symptoms attending this passion, in so strong and lively a manner, that the physician Erasistratus is said to have discovered the secret malady of the Prince Antiochus, who was in love with his mother-in-law Stratonice, merely by

examining the symptoms of his patient's distemper, by this description. Addison has inserted in two of his Spectators,* an elegant character of this poetess; and has given a translation of two of her fragments, that are exquisite in their kind; a translation, which we may presume Addison himself revised, and altered, for his friend Philips. As these two pieces are pretty well known, by being found in so popular a book as the Spectator, I shall say no more of them; but shall add two more of her fragments, which, though very short, are yet highly beautiful and tender. The first represents the languor and listlessness of a person deeply in love: we may suppose the fair author looking up earnestly on her mother, casting down the web on which she was employed, and suddenly exclaiming,

Γλυκεια μαΐερ, ου τοι
Δυναμαι κρεκειν τον ισον,
Ποθω δαμεισα παιδος.
Βραδιναν δι' Αφροδιταν.†

Dulcis

* No. 223—229.

† Inter novem illustr. fœmin. fragmenta. Edit. a Fulvio Ursino, Antwerp.

Dulcis mater! non
Possum texere telum
Amore victa pueri,
Per acrem Venerem.

The other fragment is of the descriptive kind, and seems to be the beginning of an Ode addressed to EVENING: it is quoted by Demetrius Phalereus,*

Εσπερε παντα φερεις.
Φερεις οινον, φερεις αιγα,
Φερεις μαλερι παιδα.

Vesper omnia fers;
Fers vinum, fers capram,
Fers matri filiam.

From these little fragments, the first of which is an example of the *pathetic*, and the second of the *picturesque*, the *manner* of Sappho might have been gathered, if the two longer odes had not been preserved in the treatises of Dionysius, and of Longinus. I cannot help adopting the application Addison has made of two lines of Phædrus to these remains of our poetess, which is, perhaps,

* Edit. Oxon. p. 104.

perhaps, one of the most elegant and happy applications that ever was taken from any classic:

O suavis anima! qualem te dicam bonăm
Antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquiæ!*

The versification of this translation of POPE is, in point of melody, next to that of his Pastorals. Perhaps the two following lines, in which alliteration is successfully used, are the most harmonious verses in our language; I mean in rhyme:

Ye gentle gales! beneath my body blow,
And softly lay me on the waves below!

The peculiar musicalness of the first of these lines, in particular, arises principally from its consisting entirely of iambic feet, which have always a striking, although unperceived, effect in an English verse. As for example;

Yĕ gēntlĕ gāles bĕncāth mў bōdў blōw.

* Phædr. Fab. L. iii. Fab. i. ver. 5, 6.

Even if the last foot alone be an iambic, it casts a harmony over a whole line :*

Rapt into future times the bard bĕgŭn.

There are many niceties in our versification, which few attend to, and which would demand a regular treatise fully to discuss: we should surely use every possible art to render our rough Northern language harmonious.

FENTON also has given us a translation of this epistle to Phaon, but it is in no respect equal to POPE'S: he has added another, of his own invention, of Phaon to Sappho, in which the story of the transformation of the former, from an old mariner to a beautiful youth, is well told. Fenton † was an elegant scholar, and had an exquisite

* See WARTON on Spenser, Sect. xi. page 259, &c. Milton constantly studied this beauty.

† POPE highly valued him. In a letter to Gay, Vol. VIII. p. 169, he says, "I have just received the news of the death of a friend, whom I esteemed almost as many years as you; poor Fenton. He died at East-Hamstead, of indolence and inactivity: let it not be your fate, but use exercise." Craggs, who

site taste: the books he translated for POPE in the Odyssey, are superior to Broome's. In his Miscellanies are many pieces worthy notice; particularly, his Epistle to Southerne; the Fair Nun, imitated from Fontaine; Olivia, a Character; an Ode to the Sun, and one to Lord Gower, written in the true spirit of Lyric poetry, of which the following allegory is an example:

Enamour'd of the SEINE, celestial fair,
The blooming pride of Thetis azure train,
Bacchus, to win the nymph who caus'd his care,
Lash'd his swift tigers to the Celtic plain;
There secret in her sapphire cell,
He with the Nais wont to dwell,
Leaving the nectar'd feasts of Jove;
And where her mazy waters flow,
He gave the mantling vine to grow,
A trophy to his love.

who had never received a learned education, had some time before commissioned POPE to find out for him some polite scholar, whom he proposed to take into his family, that he might acquire a taste of literature, by the conversation and instruction of the person POPE should recommend. He accordingly chose Fenton, who, at that time, was an assistant in a school at Seven Oaks, in Kent; but Craggs died unluckily for the execution of this scheme. Mr. Craggs had the candor to make no objection to Fenton, though he was a nonjuror; being, I presume, convinced he was honest as well as learned.

His tragedy of Mariamne * has undoubtedly merit, though the diction be too figurative and ornamental; it does, indeed, superabound in the richest poetic images: except this may be palliated by urging, that it suits the characters of oriental heroes, to talk in so high a strain, and to use such a luxuriance of metaphors.

From this EPISTLE of Sappho, I may take occasion to observe, that this species of writing, beautiful as it is, has not been much cultivated among us. Drayton, no despicable genius, attempted to revive it, and has left us some good subjects, though not very artfully handled.† We have

* Pope thought highly of the style of Mariamne; and used to say it was one of the best written tragedies we had; and that the dialogue was particularly good. Our author himself attempted a tragedy on the story of TIMOLEON; but not satisfying himself, laid it aside. Pope told Mr. Harte, that Fenton's Epistle to Lambard was the most Horatian epistle in our language. "I envy Fenton (said he) that Epistle." His own admirable imitations had not yet appeared. Those books of the Odyssey, which Fenton translated for our author, were the 1, 4, 19, 20. Those which Broome translated, were the 2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 16, 18, 23. The remaining books our author himself translated.

† The best of his ENGLAND'S HEROICAL EPISTLES, are King John to Matilda, Elinor Cobham to Duke Humphry, William

have also a few of this sort of epistles by the late Lord Hervey, in the fourth volume of Dodsley's Miscellanies,* Flora to Pompey,† Arisbe to Marius, and Monimia to Philocles; in which last are some pathetic strokes; and Roxana to Usbeck, taken from the incomparable ‡ Letters of the late president Montesquieu; a fine ‖ original work, in which the customs and manners of the Persians are painted with the utmost truth and liveliness, and which have been faintly imitated by the Jewish, Chinese, and other letters. The beauty of this writer is his expressive brevity,

De la Pole to Queen Margaret, Jane Shore to Edward IV. Lord Surrey to Geraldine, and Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guildford Dudley. In his BARONS' WARS, there are many strokes not unworthy of Spenser; and his Nymphidia must be allowed to be a perfect pattern of pastoral elegance.

* Page 90. & seq. † Taken from Fontenelle.

‡ Lettres Persanes. A Genève, 1716.

‖ Lady Wortley Montague, who resided so long at Constantinople, said, "One would have thought the Baron de Montesquieu had been born and bred a Turk, he has described that people, and the women particularly, so very accurately." "I had rather have written (said a man of wit) the short history of the Troglodites, consisting only of ten pages, than the admirable, the immortal history of Thuanus in ten great volumes."

which Lord Hervey has lengthened to a degree that is unnatural; especially, as Roxana is supposed to write just after she has swallowed a deadly poison, and during its violent operations. I have lately seen several pieces of this species, which, as the subjects are striking, will, I hope, one day see the light. They are entitled, "TASSO to LEONORA, written in an interval of his madness; LUCAN to NERO, just after he was condemned to death; Lady OLIVIA to CLEMENTINA, on her refusing to marry Grandison; CHARLES V. from the monastery he retired to, to the king of France; GALGACUS, general of the Britons, to AGRICOLA, that commanded the Romans; MONTEZUMA to CORTEZ; VITIKINDA, the general of the Saxons, to CHARLEMAGNE; and ROSMUNDA to ALBOINUS, king of the Lombards."

The Italians had a writer of heroic epistles called Antonio Bruni; these are some of his subjects; the HEBREW MOTHER to TITUS VESPASIAN, ERMINIA to TANCRED, CATHERINE of ARRAGON to HENRY VIII. TURNUS to LAVINIA, TANCRED to CLORINDA, ARMIDA to RINALDO, RADAMISTUS

RADAMISTUS to ZENOBIA, NAUSICAA to ULYSSES, ANGELICA to ORLANDO, SOPHONISBA to MASINISSA, SEMIRAMIS to NINUS, HONORIA to ATTILA.

But of all stories, ancient or modern, there is not, perhaps, a more proper one to furnish out an elegiac epistle, than that of ELOISA and ABELARD. Their distresses were of a most SINGULAR and PECULIAR kind; and their names sufficiently known, but not grown trite or common by too frequent usage. POPE was a most excellent IMPROVER, if no great original INVENTOR; for, as we have seen what an elegant superstructure he has raised on the little dialogue of the Comte de Gabalis, so shall we perceive, in the sequel of this Section, how finely he has worked up the hints of distress that are scattered up and down in Abelard's and Eloisa's Letters; and in a little French* history of their lives and misfortunes.† Abelard was reputed the most

 handsome,

* Printed at the Hague, 1693.

† He was born at Palais, near Nantes, in Britanny, at the beginning of the twelfth century, and studied at Paris under William Champeaux.

handsome, as well as most learned man, of his time, according to the kind of learning then in vogue. An old chronicle, quoted by * Andrew du Chesne, informs us, that scholars flocked to his lectures from all quarters of the Latin-world. And his contemporary, St. Bernard, relates, that he numbered among his disciples many principal ecclesiastics, and cardinals, at the court of Rome. Abelard himself boasts, that when he retired into the country, he was followed by such immense crowds of scholars, that they could get neither lodgings nor provisions sufficient for them; "ut nec locus hospitiis, nec terra sufficeret alimentis."† He met with the fate of many learned men, to be embroiled in controversy, and accused of heresy;

* In His. Cal. Abel. p. 1155. And the high opinion that was held of his learning, may appear from his epitaph by Pet. de Clugny.

Gallorum Socrates, Plato maximus Hesperiarum,
Noster Aristoteles, Logicis, quicunque fuerunt,
Aut par, aut melior, studiorum cognitus orbi
Princeps, ingenio varius, subtilis & acer;
Omnia vi superans rationis & arte loquendi,
Abelardus erat, &c.——

Vid. Abel. & Helois. Epist. p. 235. Edit. Rawlinson, 1718.

† Abelardi Opera, p. 19.

heresy; for St. * Bernard, whose influence and authority was very great, got his opinion of the Trinity condemned, at a council held at Sens, 1140. But the talents of † Abelard were not confined to theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, and the thorny paths of scholasticism; he gave proofs of a lively genius, by many poetical performances; insomuch, that he was reputed to be the author of the famous Romance of the Rose; which, however, was indisputably written by JOHN OF MEUN, a little city on the banks of the Loire,

* The character of this St. Bernard was singular; the president Henault thus speaks of him: "Il avoit été donné à cet homme extraordinaire de dominer les esprits." One beholds him pass in a moment from the depth of a desert to a court, where he never was misplaced; where he lived without titles, without a public character, enjoying that personal weight which is above authority. Yet no less a man of sanctity, and a man of wit, than a great politician; his sermons are masterpieces of sentiment and energy. Histoire de France: Troisieme Race. p. 145.

† One is sometimes surprized to see the honours and veneration formerly paid to men of literature, in comparison of what they meet with at present. "As every human advantage is attended with inconveniencies, the change of mens' ideas, in this particular, may probably be ascribed to the invention of PRINTING, which has rendered books so common, that even men of slender fortunes can have access to them." HUME's History of Great Britain, p. 149.

Loire, about four leagues from Orleans; which gave occasion to Marot to exclaim,

De Jean de Meun s'enfle le cours de Loire.

It was he who continued and finished the Romance of the Rose, which * William de Lorris had left imperfect forty years before. If chronology † did not absolutely contradict the notion of Abelard's being the author of this very celebrated piece, yet are there internal arguments sufficient to confute it. The mistake seems to have flowed from his having given Eloisa the name of Rose, in one of the many sonnets he addressed to her. In this romance there are many severe and satirical strokes on the character of Eloisa, which the pen of ‡ Abelard never would have given.

* Whom Marot praises as the Ennius of France;

Notre Ennius Guillaume de Lorris.

He took his name from the town of Lorris, where he was born.

† There is undoubted evidence that it was written an hundred years after Abelard flourished.

‡ Eloisa speaks thus of Abelard's poetry, and skill also in music; for he sung his own verses: "Duo autem fateor, tibi specialiter

given. In one passage, she is introduced speaking with indecency and obscenity; in another, all the vices and bad qualities of women are represented as assembled together in her alone:

Qui les mœurs féminins savoit,
Car tres-tous en soi les avoit.

In a very old epistle dedicatory, addressed to Philip the Fourth of France, by this same John of Meun, and prefixed to a French translation of Boetius, a very popular book at that time, it appears, that he also translated the Epistles of Abelard to Heloissa, which were in high vogue at the court. He mentions also, that he had translated Vegetius

specialiter inerant, quibus fœminarum quarumlibet animos statim allicere poteras; dictandi videlicet & cantandi gratia. Quæ cæteros minimè philosophos assecutos esse novimus. Quibus quidem quasi ludo quodam laborem exercitii recreans philosophici, pleraque amatorio metro vel rithmo composita reliquisti carmina, quæ præ nimiâ suavitate tam dictaminis, quam cantus, sæpius frequentata, tuum in ore omnium nomen incessanter tenebant; ut etiam illiteratos melodiæ dulcedo tui non sineret immemores esse."

Epist. i. Heloissæ. p. 51.

It is observable, that POPE judiciously softened and harmonized her name to *Eloisa* from *Heloissa*.

Vegetius on the Art Military, and a book called the Wonders of Ireland: these works shew us the taste of the age: his words are, "t' envoye ores * Boece de consolation, que j' translaté en François, jaçoit qui bien entendes le Latin."†

It is to be regretted that we have no exact picture of the person and beauty of Eloisa: Abelard himself says, that she was "facie non infima." Her extraordinary learning many circumstances concur to confirm; particularly one, which is, that the nuns of the Paraclete are wont to have the office of Whitsunday read to them in Greek, to perpetuate the memory of her understanding that language. The curious may not be displeased to be informed, that the Paraclete was built in the parish of Quincey, upon the little river Arduzon, near Nogent, upon the Seine. A lady, learned as was Eloisa in that age, who indisputably understood the Latin, Greek and Hebrew tongues, was a kind of prodigy. Her

* Chaucer also translated this piece. Boetius was a most admired classic of that age; indeed, he deserves to be so of any.

† This sentence strongly also characterises the times.

Her literature, says Abelard,* "in toto regno nominatissimam facerat:" and, we may be sure, more thoroughly attached him to her. Bussy Rabutin speaks in high terms of commendation of the purity of Eloïsa's latinity: a judgment worthy a French count! There is a force, but not an elegance, in her style; which is blemished, as might be expected, by many phrases unknown to the pure ages of the Roman language, and by many Hebraisms, borrowed from the translation of the bible.

I now propose to pass through the † EPISTLE, in order to give the reader a view of the various turns and tumults of passion, and the different sentiments with which Eloisa is agitated: and at the

* Abel. Opera, p. 10.

† The compliment which Prior paid our author on this EPISTLE, is at once full of elegance and very lively imagery. But Lord Bathurst informs me, that POPE was not pleased with it. He addresses it to Abelard, and says, that POPE has *wove*

A silken web, and ne'er shall fade
Its colours; gently has he laid
The mantle o'er thy sad distress,
And Venus shall the texture bless.
He o'er the weeping Nun has drawn
Such artful folds of sacred lawn,

That

the same time, to point out what passages are borrowed, and how much improved, from the original Letters. From this analysis, her struggles and conflicts, between duty and pleasure, between penitence and passion, will more amply and strikingly appear.

She begins with declaring how the peacefulness of her situation has been disturbed by a letter of her lover accidentally falling into her hands. This exordium is beautiful, being worked up with an awakening solemnity: she looks about her, and breaks out at once,

* In these deep solitudes and awful cells,†
Where heavenly-pensive CONTEMPLATION dwells,

And

That LOVE, with equal grief and pride,
Shall see the crime he strives to hide;
And softly drawing back the veil,
The god shall to his vot'ries tell,
Each conscious tear, each blushing grace,
That deck'd dear Eloisa's face.

ALMA. p. 101.

* Ver. 1.

† "If I was ordered to find out the most happy and the most miserable man in the world, I would look for them in a cloister," said a man of penetration.

And ever-musing MELANCHOLY reigns,
What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?
Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
Why feels my heart it's long-forgotten heat?

She then resolves neither to mention nor to write the name of Abelard; but suddenly adds, in a dramatic manner,

——— The name appears
Already written—wash it out my tears!*

She then addresses herself to the convent, where she was confined, in fine imagery:

† Relentless walls! whose darksome round contains
Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains;
‡ Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn;
Ye grots and caverns, shagg'd with horrid thorn!
Shrines,

* V. 13. † V. 17.

‡ This, and several other circumstances, in the scenery view of the monastery, which denote antiquity, may perhaps be a little blamed, on account of their impropriety, when introduced into a place so lately founded as was the Paraclete; but are so well imagined, and highly painted, that they demand excuse.

Shrines, where their vigils pale-ey'd virgins keep;
And pitying saints, whose statues learn to weep!
Tho' cold like you, unmov'd and silent grown,
I have not yet forgot myself to stone!*

She proceeds to enumerate the effects which Abelard's relation of their misfortunes has had upon her; yet, notwithstanding what she suffers from them, she intreats him still to write:

† Yet write, O write me all! that I may join
Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine.

This is from the Letters—"Per ipsum itaque—Christum obsecramus; quatenus ancillulas ipsius & tuas, crebris literis de his, in quibus adhuc fluctuas, naufragiis certificare digneris, ut nos saltem quæ tibi solæ remansimus, doloris vel gaudii participes habeas.‡ On the mention of letters, she breaks out into that beautiful account of

* "Forget thyelf to marble," is an expression of Milton; as is also, "Caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn:" and the epithets "pale-eyed, and twilight," are *first* used in the smaller poems of Milton, which Pope had just, perhaps, been reading.

† V. 41. ‡ Epist. i. Heloiss. pag. 46.

of their use, which is finely improved from the Latin.

Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid,*
Some banish'd lover, or some captive maid;
They live, they speak, they breathe, what love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires;†
The virgin's wish without her fears impart;
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart.

* Ver. 51.

† It is to be hoped that some of the fair sex, of the abilities of Eloisa, (for we have two or three such at present in Great Britain,) will answer the ingenious, but paradoxical, philosopher of Geneva, who has vented many blasphemies against the passion of love. "Il faut distinguer (says he) le MORAL du *physique* dans le sentiment de l'amour. Le *physique* est ce desir général qui porte un sexe à s'unir à l'autre: Le *moral* est ce qui détermine ce desir, & le fixe sur un seul objet, exclusivement; ou qui du moins lui donne pour cet objet préféré un plus grand degré d'énergie. Or il est facile de voir que le moral de l'amour est un sentiment factice; né de l'usage de la societé & célébré par les femmes avec beaucoup d'habileté & de soin, pour établir leur empire, & rendre dominant le sexe qui devroit obéir." DISCOURS sur l'Origine de l'INEGALITE parmi les Hommes.—Par J. J. Rousseau. Amsterdam, 1755. p. 78.

It is not to be wondered at, that he who has written a satire against human society, should satirize its greatest blessing.

" De quibuscunque autem nobis scribas, non parvum nobis remedium conferes; hoc saltem uno, quod te nostri memorem esse monstrabis." She then quotes * an unnecessary passage of Seneca, and adds, " Si imagines nobis amicorum absentium jucundæ sunt, quæ memoriam renovant, & desiderium absentiæ falso atque inani solatio levant; quanto jucundiores sunt literæ, quæ amici absentis veras notas efferunt?"† The origin of Eloisa's passion is, with much art and knowledge of human nature, ascribed to her admiration of her handsome preceptor: this circumstance is particularly poetical, and even sublime:

‡ My fancy form'd thee of angelic kind,
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous mind.
§ How oft, when press'd to marriage, have I said,
Curse on all laws but those which love has made!
Let wealth, let honour wait the wedded dame;
August her deed, and sacred be her fame;
Before true passion all these views remove;
Fame, wealth, and honour, what are you to love!

These

* Epist. p. 47. † Ibid. ‡ V. 61. § V. 73.

These sentiments are plainly from the letters, "Nihil unquam, deus scit, in te, nisi te requisivi; te purè non tua concupiscens. Non matrimonii fœdera, non dotes aliquas expectavi. Et si uxoris nomen sanctius ac validius videtur, dulcius mihi semper extitit amicæ vocabulum, aut, si non indigneris, concubinæ vel scorti.* Pope has added a very injudicious thought:

† The jealous god, when we profane his fires,
Those restless passions in revenge inspires.

And again,

‡ Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.

It is improper for a person in the situation of Eloisa to mention Cupid; mythology is here out of its place. The letters also furnished the next thought:

§ Not Cæsar's empress would I deign to prove;
No, make me mistress of the man I love.

* Epist. i. Heloiss. page 49. † V. 81.

‡ V. 75. § V. 87.

"Deum testem invoco, si me Augustus, universo presidens mundo, matrimonii honore dignaretur, totumque mihi orbem confirmaret in perpetuo præsidendum, charius mihi & dignius videretur, tua dici meretrix, quam illius imperatrix."* Next she describes their unparalleled happiness in the full and free enjoyment of their loves; but all at once stops short, and exclaims with eagerness, as if she at that instant saw the dreadful scene alluded to,

† Alas, how chang'd! What sudden horrors rise!
A naked lover, bound and bleeding lies!
Where, where was Eloise? her voice, her hand,
Her poniard had oppos'd the dire command!
Barbarian, stay! *that* bloody stroke restrain;
The crime was common, common be the pain.‡

One

* Epist. i. Heloiss. page 50. † V. 99.

‡ It was difficult to mention this catastrophe that befel Abelard with any dignity and grace; in which there is still something *indelicate*, notwithstanding all the dexterity and management of our poet, in speaking of so untoward a circumstance. I know not where castration is the chief cause of distress, in any other poem, except in a very extraordinary one of Catullus, where Atys, struck with madness by Berecynthia, in a fit of enthusiasm, inflicts this punishment on himself; after which he laments his condition in very pathetic strains. The poem has been so little remarked on, that I shall take the liberty of inserting

One knows not which most to applaud, the lively imagery, the pathetic, or the artful decency,

inserting the following passage in the speech of Atys, which is very dramatic, full of spirit, and sudden changes of passion:

Egone a meâ remota hæc ferar in nemora domo?
Patriâ, bonis, amicis, genitoribus abero?
Abero foro, palestrâ, stadio, gymnasiis?
Miser, ah miser, querendum est etiam atque etiam anime,
Quod enim genus? figura est? ego numquid abierim?
Ego mulier?—ego adolescens, ego ephebus, ego puer,
Ego gymnasii fui flos, ego eram decus olei,
Mihi januæ frequentes, mihi limina tepida;
Mihi floridis corollis redimita domus erat,
Linquendum ubi esset orto mihi sole cubiculum.
Egone deum ministra, & Cybeles famula ferar?
Egone mænas, ego mei pars, ego vir sterilis ero?
Ego viridis algida Idæ nive amicta loca colam?
Ego vitam agam sub altis Phrygiæ columinibus?
Ubi cerva sylvicultrix, ubi aper nemorivagus?
Jam jam dolet quod egi, jam, jam quoque pænitet!

The whole poem being of a strain rather superior to the generality of Roman poesy, and being also so much above the tender and elegant genius of Catullus, whose name it bears, inclines me to think it a translation from some Grecian writer; and perhaps, if the reader will peruse the whole, it will give him the truest notion of an old dithyrambic, of any poem antiquity has left us. The text is in some places much corrupted; but enough remains pure and intelligible, to place it at the head of Latin poetry, how strangely soever it has been neglected. It ought to be observed, that the seventh, eighth, and ninth

with which this transaction is delicately hinted at in these most excellent lines; which are the genuine voice of nature and passion, and place the object intended to be impressed on the reader full in his sight.

She next reminds Abelard of the solemnity of her taking the veil, from verse one hundred and six, to one hundred and eighteen, which are highly beautiful, particularly these circumstances attending the rite——

> As with *cold* lips I kiss'd the sacred veil,
> The shrines all *trembled*, and the lamps *grew pale!*

These two circumstances are fancied with equal force and propriety; and this supposed prognostic of the uneasiness she would undergo in the monastic life, is very affecting. But her passion intruded itself even in the midst of this awful——

ninth lines of this quotation, bear a wonderful resemblance to a fine passage in the book of Job, ch. xxix. ver. 6. & seq. I shall only add, that this is the only complete poem of the kind.

awful act of devotion, the strength of which she represents by this particular,

* Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,
Not on the *Cross* my eyes were fixt, but *You*.

Here she gives her fondness leave to expatiate into many amorous ideas:

† Still on that breast enamour'd let me lie,
Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,
Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be prest.

And then follows a line exquisitely passionate, and worthy the *sensibility* of Sappho or of Eloisa:

Give all thou *canst!*—and let me dream the *rest*.

Suddenly she here checks the torrent of this amorous transport—

Ah, no—instruct me other joys to prize,‡
With other beauties charm my partial eyes.
Full in my view set all the bright abode,
And make my soul quit Abelard for God.

* V. 115. † V. 121. ‡ V. 125.

She puts him in mind of his being the father and founder of the monastery, and entreats him to visit his flock on that account. This topic is taken from the Letters:

> From the false world in early youth they fled,*
> By thee to mountains, wilds, and deserts led;
> You rais'd these hallow'd walls; the desert smil'd,
> And paradise was open'd in the wild.

"Nihil hic super alienum ædificâsti fundamentum; totum quod hic est, tua creatio est. Solitudo hæc feris tantum, sive latronibus vacans, nullam hominum habitationem noverat, nullam domum habuerat. In ipsis cubilibus ferarum, in ipsis latibulis latronum, ubi nec nominari deus solet, divinum erexisti tabernaculum, et spiritûs sancti proprium dedicâsti templum. Nihil ad hoc ædificandum ex regum vel principum opibus intulisti, cum plurima posses & maxima, ut quicquid fieret, tibi soli posset ascribi."† Which last sentence is finely improved by POPE; being at once heightened with pathos and poetic imagery; and containing an oblique satire on benefactions raised by avarice, or extorted by fear.

No

* Ver. 131. † Epist. f. Heloiss. p. 40.

No weeping orphan saw his father's stores*
Our shines irradiate, or emblaze our floors;
No silver saints, by dying misers giv'n,
Here brib'd the rage of ill-requited heav'n;
But such plain roofs as piety could raise.

No part of this poem, or indeed of any of POPE's productions, is so truly poetical, and contains such strong painting, as the passage to which we are now arrived; the description of the convent, where POPE's religion certainly aided his fancy. It is impossible to read it, without being struck with a pensive pleasure, and a sacred awe, at the solemnity of the scene; so picturesque are the epithets.

In these *lone* walls, (their days eternal bound,)†
These *moss-grown* domes, with *spiry* turrets crown'd,
Where *awful* arches make the noon-day night,
And the *dim* windows shed a *solemn* light;
Thy eyes diffus'd a reconciling ray.

All the circumstances that can amuse and sooth the mind of a solitary, are next enumerated in this expressive manner: and the reader that shall be

* Ver. 135. † Ver. 141.

be disgusted at the length of the quotation, one might pronounce, has no taste either for painting or poetry:

> The darksome pines, that o'er yon rocks reclin'd,*
> Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind;
> The wand'ring streams, that shine between the hills;
> The grots, that echo to the tinkling rills;
> The dying gales, that pant upon the trees;†
> The lakes, that quiver to the curling breeze;
> No more these scenes my meditation aid,
> Or lull to rest the visionary maid.

The effect and influence of MELANCHOLY, who is beautifully personified, on every object that occurs, and on every part of the convent, cannot be too much applauded, or too often read, as it is founded on nature and experience. That temper of mind casts a gloom on all things.

> But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,‡
> Long-sounding iles, and intermingled graves,
>
> Black

* V. 155.

† Read with this passage, Mr. Gray's account of his journey to the Grande Chartreuse. Works 4to. p. 67.

‡ Ver. 163.

Black MELANCHOLY sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose;
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades every flower, and darkens every green,
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

The figurative expressions, *throws*, and *breathes*, and *browner* horror, are, I verily believe, some of the strongest and boldest in the English language. The IMAGE of the Goddess MELANCHOLY sitting over the convent, and, as it were, expanding her dreadful wings over its whole circuit, and diffusing her gloom all around it, is truly sublime, and strongly conceived.

Eloisa proceeds to give an account of the opposite sentiments, that divide and disturb her soul; these are hinted in the Letters also.

Ah, wretch! believ'd the spouse of God in vain,*
Confess'd within the slave of love and man!
I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;
I mourn the lover, not lament the fault.

This,

* V. 177.

This, however, is improved greatly on the original. "Castam me prædicant, qui non deprehenderunt hypocritam."* — "Quomodo etiam pœnitentia peccatorum dicitur, quantacunque sit corporis afflictio, si mens adhuc ipsam peccandi retinet voluntatem, & pristinis æstuat desideriis?"† She then fondly calls on Abelard for assistance:

O come! O teach me nature to subdue,‡
Renounce my love, my life, myself, and—you!
Fill my fond heart with God alone; for he
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee!

Fired with this idea of religion, she takes occasion to dwell on the happiness of a BLAMELESS vestal, one who has no such sin on her conscience, as she has, to bemoan. The life of such an one is described at full length by such *sorts* of pleasure as none but a spotless nun can partake of; the climax of her happiness is finely conducted:

For

* Epist. p. 68. † Ibid. 66.

‡ V. 203.

For her th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
And wings of Seraphs shed divine perfumes;
For her the SPOUSE prepares the bridal ring,*
For her white virgins hymeneals sing;
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
And melts in visions of eternal day!

What a judicious and poetical use hath POPE here made of the opinions of the mystics and quietists! how would Fenelon have been delighted with these lines! True poetry, after all, cannot well subsist, at least is never so striking, without a tincture of enthusiasm. The sudden transition has a fine effect:

Far other dreams my erring soul employ,†
Far other raptures of unholy joy.

Which raptures are painted with much sensibility, and in very animating colours. "Nec etiam dormienti suis illusionibus parcunt."‡

Again,

O curst dear horrors of all-conscious night;§
How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight!

This

* Ver. 217. † V. 223.

‡ V. 225. § V. 229.

This is very forcibly expressed. She proceeds to recount a dream, in which I was always heavily disappointed, because the imagined distress is such as might attend the dreams of any person whatever.*

> ———Methinks we wand'ring go†
> Thro' dreary wastes, and weep each other's woe,
> Where, round some mould'ring tow'r pale ivy creeps,
> And low-brow'd rocks hang nodding o'er the deeps;
> Sudden you mount, you beckon from the skies,
> Clouds interpose, &c.

These are, indisputably, picturesque lines; but what we want is a VISION of some such appropriated and peculiar distress, as could be incident to none but Eloisa; and which should be drawn from, and have reference to, her single story. What distinguishes Homer and Shakespeare from all other poets, is, that they do not give their readers GENERAL ideas; every image is the particular and unalienable property of the person who uses it; it is suited to no other; it is made for him or her alone. Even Virgil himself is not free from this fault, but is frequently general

* It is partly from Dido's dream. † V. 241.

neral and indiscriminating, where Homer is minutely circumstantial. She next compares his situation with her own:

> For thee the fates, severely kind, ordain*
> A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;
> Thy life a long dead calm of fixt repose;
> No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows.†

Here Eloisa glances with great modesty and delicacy, at the irreparable misfortune of her mutilated lover, which she always mentions with regret.

A hint in the Letters has been beautifully heightened, and elevated into exquisite poetry, in the next paragraph. Eloisa says only, "Inter ipsa missarum solemnia, ubi purior esse debeat oratio, obscœna earum voluptatum phantasmata ita sibi penitus miserrimam captivant animam, ut turpitudinibus illis, magis quam orationi, vacem.—Nec solum quæ egimus, sed loca pariter & tempora,"

* V. 249.

† The four similies that follow, drawn from religion, are admirable.

& tempora,"* &c.—Let us see how this has been improved.

'What scenes appear where'er I turn my view!†
The dear ideas where I fly pursue,
Rise in the grove, before the altar rise—

Then follows a circumstance peculiarly tender and proper, as it refers to a particular excellence of Abelard:

Thy Voice I seem in every hymn to hear,‡
With every bead I drop too soft a tear.

To which succeeds that sublime description of a high mass, which came from the poet's soul, and is very striking:

When from the censer clouds of fragrance roll,§
And swelling organs lift the rising soul,
One thought of thee puts all the pomp to flight,
Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight;
In seas of flame my plunging soul is drown'd,
While altars blaze, and angels tremble round.

I believe

* Epist. ii. Heloiss. page 67.
† V. 263.
‡ V. 269.
§ V. 271.

I believe few persons have ever been present at the celebrating a mass in a good choir, but have been extremely affected with awe, if not with devotion; which ought to put us on our guard against the insinuating nature of so pompous and alluring a religion. Lord Bolingbroke being one day present at this solemnity, in the chapel at Versailles, and seeing the archbishop of Paris elevate the host, whispered his companion, the Marquis de * * * * *, "If I were king of France, I would always perform this ceremony myself."

Eloisa now acknowledges the weakness of her religious efforts, and gives herself up to the prevalence of her passion.

> Come, with once glance of those deluding eyes,*
> Blot out each bright idea of the skies;
> Take back that grace, that sorrow, and these tears;
> Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs;
> Snatch me, just mounting, from the blest abode;
> Assist the fiends, and tear me from my God!

Suddenly religion rushes back on her mind, and she exclaims eagerly,

* V. 283.

No; fly me, fly me! far as pole to pole!—*
Ah, *come* not, *write* not, *think* not once of me,
Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee.
Thy oaths I quit, thy memory resign;
Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine.

This change is judicious and moving. And the following invocation to hope, faith, and Christian grace, to come and take full possession of her soul, is solemn, and suited to the condition of her mind; for it seems to be the poet's intention, to shew the force of religion over passion at last, and to represent her as a little calm and resigned to her destiny and way of life: to fix her in which holy temper, the circumstance that follows may be supposed to contribute. For she relates an incident to Abelard, which had made a very deep impression on her mind, and cannot fail of making an equal one on the mind of those readers who can relish true poetry, and strong imagery. The scene she paints is awful: she represents herself lying on a tomb, and thinking she heard some † spirit calling to her in every low wind:

Here

* V. 289. † V. 307.

Here as I watch'd the dying lamps around,*
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound;
Come, sister, come, (it said, or seem'd to say;)
Thy place is here, sad sister, come away!
Once, like thyself, I trembled, wept, and pray'd:†
Love's victim then, but now a sainted maid.

This scene would make a fine subject for the pencil, and is worthy a capital painter. He might place Eloisa in the long aisle of a great Gothic church; a lamp should hang over her head, whose dim and dismal ray should afford only light enough to make darkness visible. She herself should be represented in the *instant* when she first hears this aerial voice, and in the attitude of *starting round* with astonishment and fear. And this was the method a very great master took *to paint a sound,* if I may be allowed the expression. This subject was the baptism of Jesus Christ; and, in order to bring into the piece the remarkable incident of the voice from

 heaven,

* Virgil, however, gave the hint.—Hinc exaudiri voces, & verba vocantis visa viri—L. iv. 460.

† It is well contrived, that this invisible speaker should be a person that had been under the very same kind of misfortunes with Eloisa.

heaven, which cried aloud, "This is my beloved son," he represented all the assembly that attended on the banks of Jordan, gazing up into heaven with the utmost ardor of amazement.

At this call of a sister in misfortune, who had been visited with a sad similitude of griefs with her own, Eloisa breaks out in a religious transport.

> I come, I come! prepare your roseate bow'rs,
> Cœlestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs;
> Thither where *sinners* may have rest I go!

She then calls on Abelard to pay her the last sad offices, and to be present with her in the article of death:

> See my lips tremble, and my eyeballs roll—

And then a circumstance of personal fondness intervenes:

> *Suck* my last breath, and catch my flying soul!

But

But she instantly corrects herself, and would have her Abelard attend her at these last solemn moments, only as a devout priest, and not as a fond lover. The image, in which she represents him coming to administer extreme unction, is striking and picturesque:

> Ah, no—in sacred vestments mayst thou stand,
> The hallow'd taper * *trembling* in thy hand;
> *Present* the cross before my *lifted* eye;
> Teach me at once, and learn of me, to die!

She adds, that it will be *some* consolation to behold him once more, though even in the agonies of death:

> Ah then! thy once-lov'd Eloisa see!
> It will be *then* no crime to *gaze* on me!

Which last line I could never read without great emotion; it is at once so pathetic, and so artfully points back to the whole train and nature of their misfortunes. The circumstances she wishes may attend the death of Abelard, are

 poetically

* The words printed in Italics ought to be looked on as particularly beautiful.

poetically imagined, and are also agreeable to the notions of mystic devotion. The death of St. Jerome is finely painted by DOMENICHINO, with such attendant particulars:

> In trance ecstatic may thy pangs be drown'd;*
> Bright clouds descend, and angels watch thee round;
> From opening skies may streaming glories shine,
> And saints embrace thee with a love like mine.
> May one kind grave unite each hapless name,
> And graft my love immortal on thy fame!

This wish was fulfilled. The body of Abelard, who died twenty years before Eloisa, was sent to Eloisa, who interred it in the monastery of the Paraclete, and it was accompanied with a very extraordinary form of Absolution, from the famous Peter de Clugny; "Ego Petrus Cluniacensis abbas, qui Petrum Abelardum in monachum Cluniacensem recepi, & corpus ejus furtim delatum Heloissæ Abbatissæ, & monialibus Paracleti concessi, auctoritate omnipotentis Dei, & omnium sanctorum, absolvo eum, pro officio, ab omnibus peccatis suis."†—"Eloisa herself (says

* Ver. 339.

† Epis. Abel. & Heloiss. p. 238.

(says * Vigneul Marville) solicited for this absolution, and Peter de Clugny willingly granted it: on what it could be founded, I leave to our learned theologists to determine. In certain ages, opinions have prevailed, for which no solid reason can be given." When Eloisa died in 1163, she was interred by the side of her beloved husband. I must not forget to mention, for the sake of those who are fond of modern miracles, that when she was put into the grave, Abelard stretched out his arms to receive her, and closely embraced her.

Eloisa, at the conclusion of the EPISTLE to which we are now arrived, is judiciously represented as gradually settling into a tranquillity of mind, and seemingly reconciled to her fate. She can bear to speak of their being buried together, without violent emotions. Two lovers are introduced as visiting their celebrated tombs, and the behaviour of these strangers is finely imagined:

If ever chance two wand'ring lovers brings,
To Paraclete's white walls and silver springs,

 O'er

* Melanges, T. ii. p. 55.

O'er the pale marble shall they join their heads,
And drink the falling tears each other sheds;
Then sadly say, with mutual pity mov'd,
Oh! may we never love as these have lov'd!

The poet adds, still farther, what impressions a view of their sepulchre would make even on a spectator less interested than these two lovers; and how it could affect his mind, even in the midst of the most solemn acts of religion:

From the full quire when loud Hosannas rise,*
And swell the pomp of *dreadful* sacrifice,
Amid that scene, if some relenting eye
Glance on the stone where our cold relics lie,
Devotion's self shall steal a thought from heav'n,
One human tear shall drop—and be forgiven!

With this last line, at first it appears, that the poem should have ended; for the eight additional verses,† concerning some poet that haply might arise

* Ver. 353.

† And sure if fate some future bard shall join
In sad similitude of grief to mine,
Condemn'd *whole years* in *absence* to deplore,
And *image* charms he must behold no more;
Such if there be, who loves so long, so well,
Let him our sad, our tender story tell!
The well-sung woes will sooth my pensive *ghost*;
He best can *paint* 'em, who can *feel* 'em most.

arise to sing their misfortune, are languid and flat, and diminish the pathos of the foregoing sentiments. They might stand, it should seem, for the conclusion of almost any story, were we not informed, that they were added by the Poet in allusion to his own case, and the state of his own mind. For I am well informed, that what determined him in the choice of the subject of this epistle, was the retreat of that lady into a nunnery, whose death he had lately so pathetically lamented in a foregoing Elegy, and for whom he had conceived a violent passion. She was first beloved by a nobleman,* an intimate friend of POPE, and, on his deserting her, retired into France; when, before she had made her last vows in the convent to which she had retreated, she put an end to her unfortunate life. The recollection of this circumstance will add a beauty and a pathos to many passages in the poem, and will confirm the doctrine delivered above, concerning the choice of subject.

This EPISTLE is, on the whole, one of the most highly finished, and certainly the most interesting,

* The Duke of Buckingham—Sheffield.

teresting, of the pieces of our author; and, together with the ELEGY to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, is the only instance of the Pathetic POPE has given us. I think one may venture to remark, that the reputation of POPE, as a Poet, among posterity, will be principally owing to his WINDSOR FOREST, his RAPE OF THE LOCK, and his ELOISA TO ABELARD; whilst the facts and characters alluded to and exposed in his later writings, will be forgotten and unknown, and their poignancy and propriety little relished. For WIT and SATIRE are transitory and perishable, but NATURE and PASSION are eternal.

SECTION

SECTION VII.

OF THE TEMPLE OF FAME, FROM CHAUCER.

FEW disquisitions are more amusing, or perhaps more instructive, than those which relate to the rise and gradual increase of literature in any kingdom: And among the various species of literature, the origin and progress of poetry, however shallow reasoners may despise it, is a subject of no small utility. For the manners and customs, the different ways of thinking and of living, the favourite passions, pursuits, and pleasures, of men, appear in no writings so strongly marked, as in the works of the poets in their respective ages; so that in these compositions, the historian, the moralist, the politician, and the philosopher, may each of them meet with abundant matter for reflection and observation.

Poetry

Poetry made its first appearance in Britain, as perhaps in most other countries, in the form of chronicles, intended to perpetuate the deeds both of civil and military heroes, but mostly the latter. Of this species is the chronicle of Robert of Glocester; and of this species also was the song, or ode, of Roland, which William the Conqueror, and his followers, sung at their landing in this kingdom from Normandy. The mention of which event will naturally remind us of the check it gave to the native strains of the old British poetry, by an introduction of foreign manners, customs, images, and language. These ancient strains were, however, sufficiently harsh, dry, and uncouth. And it was to the *Italians* we owed any thing that could be called poetry: from whom Chaucer, imitated by POPE in this vision, copied largely, as *they* are said to have done from the Bards of Provence; and to which Italians he is perpetually owning his obligations, particularly to Boccace and Petrarch. But Petrarch had great advantages, which Chaucer wanted, not only in the friendship and advice of Boccace, but still more in having found such a predecessor as Dante. In the year 1359, Boccace sent

sent to Petrarch a copy of Dante, whom he called his father, written with his own hand. And it is remarkable, that he accompanied his present with an apology for sending this poem to Petrarch, who, it seems, was jealous of Dante, and in the answer speaks coldly of his merits. This circumstance, unobserved by the generality of writers, and even by Fontanini, Crescembini, and Muratori, is brought forward, and related at large, in the third volume, page 507, of the very entertaining Memoirs of the Life of Petrarch. In the year 1363, Boccace, driven from Florence by the plague, visited Petrarch at Venice, and carried with him Leontius Pilatus, of Thessalonica, a man of genius, but of haughty, rough, and brutal manners: from this singular man, who perished in a voyage from Constantinople to Venice, 1365, Petrarch received a Latin translation of the Iliad and Odyssey. Muratori, in his 1. book, Della Perfetta Poesia, p. 18, relates, that a very few years after the death of Dante, 1321, a most curious work on the Italian poetry was written by a M. A. di Tempo, of which he had seen a manuscript in the great library at Milan, of the year 1332, and of which this is

the title: Incipit Summa *Artis Ritmici vulgaris* dictaminis. The chapters are thus divided. Ritmorum *vulgarium* septem sunt genera. 1. Est Sonetus. 2. Ballata. 3. Cantio extensa. 4. Rotundellus. 5. Mandrialis. 6. Serventesius. 7. Motus confectus. But whatever Chaucer might copy from the Italians, yet the artful and entertaining plan of his Canterbury Tales was purely original, and his own. This admirable piece, even exclusive of its poetry, is highly valuable, as it preserves to us the liveliest and exactest picture of the manners, customs, characters, and habits, of our forefathers, whom he has brought before our eyes acting as on a stage, suitably to their different orders and employments. With these portraits the driest antiquary must be delighted: by this plan he has more judiciously connected these stories which the guests relate, than Boccace has done his novels; whom he has imitated, if not excelled, in the variety of the subjects of his tales. It is a common mistake, that Chaucer's excellence lay in his manner of treating light and ridiculous subjects; for whoever will attentively consider the noble poem of Palamon and Arcite, will be convinced,

vinced, that he equally excels in the pathetic and the sublime. It has been but lately proved, that the Palamon and Arcite of Chaucer, is taken from the Theseida of Boccace; a poem which has been, till within a few years past, strangely neglected and unknown; and of which Mr. Tyrwhitt has given a curious and exact summary, in his Dissertation on the Canterbury Tales, vol. iv. p. 135. I cannot forbear expressing my surprise, that the circumstance of Chaucer's borrowing this tale should have remained so long unobserved, when it is so plainly and positively mentioned in a book so very common as the Memoirs of *Niceron*; who says, t. 33. p. 44, after giving an abstract of the story of Palamon and Arcite, *G. Chaucer*, l'Homere de son pays, a mis l'ouvrage de Boccace en *vers Anglois*. This book was published by *Niceron* 1736. He also mentions a French translation of the Theseida, published at Paris M,D,CC. 1597, in 12mo. The late Mr. *Stanley*, who was as accurately skilled in modern as in ancient Greek, for a long time was of opinion, that this poem, in modern political Greek verses, was the original; in which opinion he was confirmed by the Abbé *Barthelemy*,

at Paris, whose learned correspondence with Mr. *Stanley* on this subject I have read. At last Mr. *Stanley* gave up this opinion, and was convinced that Boccace invented the tale. *Crescembini* and *Muratori* have mentioned the Theseida more than once. That very laborious and learned antiquary *Apostolo Zeno*, speaks thus of it, in his Notes to the Bibliotheca of *Fontanini*, p. 450, t. i. Questa opera pastorale (that is, the *ameto)* che prende il nome dal pastore ameto, ha data l'origine all *egloga* Italiana, non senza lode del *Boccacio*, cui pure la nostra lingua du il ritrovamento della *ottava* rima (which was first used in the Theseida) e del *poema eroico*. *Gravina* does not mention this poem. *Crescembini* gives this opinion of it, p. 118, t. 1. Nel medesimo secolo del Petrarca, il Boccacio diede principio all' *Epica*, colla sua *Teseide*, e col *Filostrato;* ma nello stile non eccedé la mediocrità, anzi sovente cadde nell' umile. The fashion that has lately obtained, in all the nations of Europe, of republishing and illustrating their old poets, does honour to the good taste and liberal curiosity of the present age. It is always pleasing, and indeed useful, to look back to the rude beginnings

of

of any art, brought to a greater degree of elegance and grace.

Aurea nunc, olim sylvestribus horrida damis.

VIRG.

Among other instances of vanity, the French are perpetually boasting, that they have been our masters in many of the polite arts, and made earlier improvements in literature. But it may be asked, what contemporary poet can they name to stand in competition with Chaucer, except William de Loris? In carefully examining the curious work of the president Fauchet, on the characters of the ancient French poets, I can find none of this age, but barren chroniclers, and harsh romancers in rhyme, without the elegance, elevation, invention, or harmony, of Chaucer. Pasquiere informs us, that it was about the time of Charles VI. 1380, that les chants* royaux, balades, rondeaux, and pastorales, began to be in vogue; but

* Zurita, the Spanish historian, relates, that John the First, King of Arragon, invited the *Troubadours* to settle in Barcelona in the fourteenth century. The famous Marquis of Villena, who wrote the celebrated work, called *Gaya Scientia*, died 1434.

but these compositions are low and feeble, in comparison of the venerable English bard. Froissart, the valuable historian, about the same time wrote very indifferent verses. Charles of Orleans, father of Lewis XII. left a manuscript of his poems. At his death Francis Villon was thirty-three years old; and John Marot, the father of Clement, was then born. According to Boileau, whose testimony as a poet, but not, I fear, as an antiquarian, should be regarded, Villon was the first who gave any form and order to the French poetry.

> Villon sceut le premier, dans ces siecles grossieurs,
> D' ebroüiller l' art confus de nos vieux Romancièrs.*

But Villon was merely a pert and insipid ballad-monger, whose thoughts and diction were as low and illiberal as his life.

The HOUSE of FAME, as Chaucer entitled his piece, gave the hint, as we observed, of the poem before us; though the design is, in truth, improved and heightened by the masterly hand of

* L'Art. Poet. chan. i.

of POPE. It is not improbable, that this subject was suggested to our author, not only by Dryden's translations of Chaucer, of which POPE was so fond, but likewise by that celebrated paper of Addison, in the Tatler, called the Tables of Fame, to which the great worthies of antiquity are introduced, and seated according to their respective merits and characters; and which was published some years before this poem was written. Chaucer himself borrowed his description from Ovid, in the beginning of the twelfth book of his Metamorphoses, from whence he has closely copied the situation and formation of the edifice.

Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque,
Cœlestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi,
Unde quod est usquam, quamvis regionibus absit,
Inspicitur, penetratque cavas vox omnis ad aures.*

Ovid has introduced some allegorical personages, but has not distinguished them with any picturesque epithets:

* Ver. 39.

Illic CREDULITAS, illic temerarius ERROR,
Vanaque LÆTITIA est, consternatique TIMORES,
SEDITIOQUE recens, dubioque auctore SUSURRI.*

Dryden translated this passage of Ovid: and POPE, who evidently formed himself upon Dryden, could not but have frequently read it with pleasure, particularly the following harmonious lines:

'Tis built of brass, the better to diffuse
The spreading sounds, and multiply the news;
Where echos in repeated echos play:
A mart for ever full, and open night and day.
Nor silence is within, nor voice express,
But a deaf noise of sounds that never cease,
† Confus'd, and chiding, like the hollow roar
Of tides receding from th' insulted shore:
Or like the broken thunder heard from far,
When Jove to distance drives the rolling war.

It

* Ver. 59.

† Confus'd, &c.

This is more poetically expressed than the same image in our author.

Sudden I heard a wild promiscuous sound,
Like broken thunders that at distance roar,
Or billows murm'ring on the hollow shore.

Dryden's

It is time to proceed to some remarks on particular passages of this Vision, which I shall do in the order in which they occur, not censuring or commending any, without a reason assigned.

1. Nor was the work impair'd by storms alone,
But felt th' approaches of too warm a sun;
For Fame, impatient of extremes, decays
Not more by envy, than excess of praise.

Does not this use of the heat of the sun appear to be a puerile and far-fetched conceit? What connection is there betwixt the two sorts of excesses here mentioned? My purpose in animadverting so frequently, as I have done, on this species of false thoughts, is to guard the reader, especially of the younger sort, from being betrayed by the authority of so correct a writer as POPE, into such specious and false or-

 naments

Dryden's lines are superior to the original.

Qualia de pelagi, siquis procul audiat, undis
Esse solent, qualemvé sonum, cum Jupiter atras
Increpuit nubes, extrema tonitrua reddunt.
B. xii. V. 50.

In this passage of Dryden are many instances of the alliteration, which he has managed beautifully.

naments of stile. For the same reason, the opposition of ideas in the three last words of the following line may be condemned.

And legislators seem to think in stone.*

2. So Zembla's rocks, the beauteous work of frost,
Rise white in air, and glitter o'er the coast;
Pale suns, unfelt, at distance roll away,
And on th' impassive ice the light'nings play;
Eternal snows the growing mass supply,
Till the bright mountains prop th' incumbent sky;
As Atlas fix'd each hoary pile appears,
The gather'd Winter of a thousand years.†

A real lover of painting will not be contented with a single view and examination of this beautiful ‡ winter-piece, but will return to it, again and again, with fresh delight. The images are distinct, and the epithets lively and appropriated, especially the words, *pale, unfelt, impassive, incumbent, gathered.*

3. There great Alcides, stooping with his toil,
Rests on his club, and holds the Hesperian spoil.§

It

* V. 74. † V. 53.

‡ The reader may consult Thomson's WINTER, v. 905.

§ V. 81.

It were to be wished, that our author, whose knowledge and taste of the fine arts were unquestionable, had taken more pains in describing so famous a statue as that of the Farnesian Hercules, to which he plainly refers; for he has omitted the characteristical excellencies of this famous piece of Grecian workmanship, namely, the uncommon breadth of the shoulders, the knottiness and spaciousness of the * chest, the firmness and protuberance of the muscles in each limb, particularly the legs, and the majestic vastness of the whole figure, undoubtedly designed by the artist to give a full idea of STRENGTH, as the Venus de Medicis of BEAUTY. These were the "invicti membra Glyconis," which, it is probable, Horace proverbially alluded to in his first epistle.† The name of Glycon is to this day preserved on the base of the figure, as the maker of it; and as the virtuosi, customarily in speaking of a picture, or statue, call it their RAPHAEL or BERNINI, why should

* Luxuriatque toris animosum pectus. — — —
Virg. Georg. lib. iii. ver. 81.

† V. 30.

not Horace, in common speech, use the name of the workman instead of the work? To mention the Hesperian apples, which the artist flung backwards, and almost concealed as an inconsiderable object, and which therefore scarcely appear in the statue, was below the notice of POPE.

4. Amphion there the loud creating lyre
Strikes, and beholds a sudden Thebes aspire.
Cythæron's echos answer to his call,
And half the mountain rolls into a wall:
There might you see the lengthening spires ascend,—
The domes swell up, the widening arches bend,
The growing tow'rs like exhalations rise,
And the huge columns heave into the skies.*

It may be imagined, that these expressions are too bold; and a phlegmatic critic might ask, how it was possible to see, in sculpture, Arches *bending*, and Towers *growing?* But the best writers, in speaking of pieces of painting and sculpture, use the present or imperfect tense, and talk of the thing as really doing, to give a force to the description. Thus Virgil,

———Gallos in limine adesse canebat.†

—Incedunt

* V. 85. † Lib. viii. v. 656.

—Incedunt victæ longo ordine gentes,
Quam variæ linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis.*

As Pliny says, that, Clesilochus painted, "Jovem muliebriter ingemiscentem." And Homer, in his beautiful and lively description of the shield,

— — — — — εν δ' αρα τοισιν
Αυλοι φορμιγγες τε βοην εχον.† — — —

And again,

Μυκηθμω δ' απο κοπρω επισσευοντο νομοιδε,
Παρ τωΐλαμον κελαδοντα.‡ — — —

In another place,

— — — — Λινον υπο καλον αειδε.§

Upon which Clark has made an observation that surprises me: "sed quomodo in scuto DEPINGI potuit, quem CANERET citharista?"

This

* Lib. viii. v. 722.
† Iliad, lib. xviii. v. 494.
‡ V. 575.
§ V. 570.

This passage must not be parted with, till we have observed the artful rest upon the first syllable of the second verse:

> Amphion there the loud creating lyre
> Strikes | .

There are many instances of such judicious pauses in Homer.

> Αὐλαρ επειΐ' αὐλοισι βελος εχεπευκες εφιεις
> Βαλλ'.* — — — —

As likewise in the great imitator of Homer, who always accommodates the sound to the sense:

> And over them triumphant death his dart
> Shook.† — — — — —

> — — — — — Others on the grass
> Couch'd.‡ — — — —

And of his blindness:

> —— But

* Lib. i. v. 51. † Milton, b. xi. v. 491.

‡ B. iv. v. 351.

— — — — But not to me returns
Day! — — — — —

In the spirited speech of Satan:

— — — — All good to me becomes
Bane.* — — — — —

These monosyllables have much force and energy. The Latin language does not admit of such. Virgil, therefore, who so well understood and copied all the secret arts and charms of Homer's versification, has afforded us no examples; yet, some of his pauses on words of more syllables in the beginning of lines are emphatical:

Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes,
Ingens.† — — — —

— — — Hærent infixi pectore vultus
Verbaque.‡ — — — —

Sola domo mœret vacua, stratisque relictis
Incubat.§ — — — —

——— Pecudesque

* B. ix. v. 122.
† Georg. i. v. 476.
‡ Æn. iv. v. 4.
§ Æn. iv. v. 82.

— — — — Pecudesque locutæ,
Infandum!* — — — —

5. These stopp'd the moon, and call'd th' unbody'd shades
To midnight banquets in the glimm'ring glades;
Made visionary fabrics round them rise,
And airy spectres skim before their eyes;
Of Talismans and Sigils knew the pow'r,
And careful watch'd the planetary hour.†

These superstitions of the East are highly striking to the imagination. Since the time that poetry has been forced to assume a more sober, and, perhaps, a more rational air, it scarcely ventures to enter these fairy regions. There are some, however, who think it has suffered by deserting these fields of fancy, and by totally laying aside the descriptions of magic and enchantment. What an exquisite picture has Thomson given us in his delightful CASTLE OF INDOLENCE!

As when a shepherd of the Hebrid Isles,
Plac'd far amid the melancholy Main,
(Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
Or that aerial beings sometimes deign

To

* Georg. i. v. 478. † V. 101.

To stand, embodied, to our senses plain,)
Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
The whilst in ocean Phœbus dips his wain,
A vast assembly moving to and fro,
Then all at once in air dissolves the wonderous show.*

I cannot at present recollect any solitude so romantic, or peopled with beings so proper to the place, and the spectator. The mind naturally loves to lose itself in one of these wildernesses, and to forget the hurry, the noise and splendor of more polished life.

6. But on the South, a long majestic race
Of Ægypt's priests the gilded niches grace.†

I wish POPE had enlarged on the rites and ceremonies of these Ægyptian priests, a subject finely suited to descriptive poetry. Milton has touched some of them finely, in an ode not sufficiently attended to :

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling

* Castle of Indolence, Stan. 30. B. 1.

† V. 109.

Trampling the unshower'd grass with lowings loud:
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest,
Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud:
In vain with timbrel'd anthems dark,
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worship'd ark.*

7. High on his car Sesostris struck my view,
Whom sceptred slaves in golden harness drew;
His hands a bow and pointed jav'lin hold,
His giant limbs are arm'd in scales of gold.†

This colossal statue of the celebrated Eastern tyrant is not very strongly imagined. As Phidias is said to have received his ideas of majesty in his famous Jupiter, from a passage in Homer, so it is to be wished, that our author's imagination had been inflamed and enlarged, by studying Milton's magnificent picture of Satan. The word *hold*, in the third line, is particularly feeble and flat. It is well known, that the Ægyptians, in all their productions of art, mistook the gigantic for the sublime, and greatness of bulk for greatness of manner.

8. Of

* Milton's Poems, Vol. II. Page 30. Newton's Edit. Oct.

† V. 113.

3. Of Gothic structure was the Northern side,
O'erwrought with ornaments of barb'rous pride.*

"Those who have considered the theory of Architecture, (says a writer who had thoroughly studied it,) tell us the proportions of the three Grecian orders were taken from the Human Body, as the most beautiful and perfect production of nature. Hence were derived those graceful ideas of columns, which had a character of strength without clumsiness, and of delicacy without weakness. Those beautiful proportions were, I say, taken originally from nature, which, in her creatures, as hath been already observed, referreth to some use, end, or design. The Gonfiezza also, or swelling, and the diminution of a pillar, is it not in such proportion as to make it appear strong and light at the same time? In the same manner, must not the whole entablature, with its projections, be so proportioned, as to seem great, but not heavy; light, but not little; inasmuch as a deviation into either extreme, would thwart that reason and use of things,

* V. 119.

wherein their beauty is founded, and to which it is subordinate? The entablature, and all its parts and ornaments, architrave, freeze, cornice; triglyphs, metopes, modiglions, and the rest, have each an use, or appearance of use, in giving firmness and union to the building, in protecting it from the weather, in casting off the rain, in representing the ends of the beams with their intervals, the production of the rafters, and so forth. And if we consider the graceful angles in frontispieces, the spaces between the columns, or the ornaments of the capitals, shall we not find that their beauty ariseth from the appearance of use, or the imitation of natural things, whose beauty is originally founded on the same principle? Which is, indeed, the grand distinction between Grecian and Gothic architecture: the latter being fantastical, and for the most part founded neither in nature nor reason, in necessity nor use; the appearance of which accounts for all the beauties, graces, and ornaments of the other."*

9. There

* Alciphron, Vol. I. Dial. III.

9. There sat Zamolxis with erected eyes,
And Odin here in mimic trances dies.
There on rude iron columns, smear'd with blood,
The horrid forms of Scythian heroes stood;
Druids and bards, (their once loud harps unstrung,)
And youths that died to be by poets sung.*

Sir William Temple, always a pleasing, though not a solid writer, relates the following anecdote. "In discourse upon this subject, and confirmation of this opinion having been general among the Goths of those countries, Count Oxenstiern, the Swedish Ambassador, told me, there was still in Sweden, a place which was a memorial of it, and was called Odin's Hall: that it was a great bay in the sea, encompassed on three sides with steep and ragged rocks; and that in the time of the Gothic Paganism, men that were either sick of diseases they esteemed mortal or incurable, or else grown invalid with age, and thereby past all military action, and fearing to die meanly and basely, as they esteemed it, in their beds, they usually caused themselves to be brought to the nearest part of

* V. 123.

these rocks, and from thence threw themselves down into the sea, hoping, by the boldness of such a violent death, to renew the pretence of admission into the Hall of Odin, which they had lost by failing to die in combat, and by arms."*

In these beautiful verses we must admire the postures of Zamolxis and Odin, which exactly point out the characters of these famous legislators, and instructors, of the Northern nations.

As expressive, and as much in character, are the figures of the old heroes, druids, and bards, which are represented as standing on iron pillars of barbarous workmanship: they remind one of that group of personages, which Virgil, a lover of antiquity, as every real poet must be, has judiciously placed before the palace of Latinus:

> Quinetiam veterum effigies ex ordine avorum,
> Antiqua e cedro, Italusque, paterque Sabinus
> Vitisator, curvam servans sub imagine falcem;
> Saturnusque senex, Janique bifrontis imago,
> Vestibulo astabant.†—

Consider

* Temple's Works, Vol. III. page 238.

† Ver. 177. Æn. l. 7.

Consider also the description of Evander's court, and the picture of ancient manners it affords, one of the most striking parts of the Æneid. The mind delights to be carried backward into those primitive times when

— — — Passimque *armenta* videbant
Romanoque *foro* & *lautis mugire* carinis.

And the view of those places and buildings in their first rude and artless state, which became afterwards so magnificent and celebrated, forms an amusing contrast.

I have frequently wondered that our modern writers have made so little use of the druidical times, and the traditions of the old bards, which afford subjects fruitful of the most genuine poetry, with respect both to imagery and sentiment. Mr. Gray, however, has made ample amends, by his last noble ode on the expulsion of the Bards from Wales:

Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,
That hush'd the stormy main:
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred, whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-top'd head

On dreary Arvon's shore they lie,
Smear'd with gore, and ghastly pale!
Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
The famish'd eagle screams, and passes by.*

The ancients constantly availed themselves of the mention of particular mountains, rivers, and other objects of nature; and, indeed, almost confine themselves to the tales and traditions of their respective countries: whereas we have been strangely neglectful in celebrating our own SEVERN, THAMES, or MALVERN, and have therefore fallen into trite repetitions of classical images, as well as classical names. Our muses have seldom been

— — — — playing on the steep
Where our old bards, the famous Druids, lie,†
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wisard stream.‡

Milton,

* Dodsley's Miscellanies, Vol. VI. p. 327.

† Supposed to be a place in the mountains of Denbighshire, called *Druids Stones*, because of the many stone chests and coffins found there.

‡ Lycidas, Ver. 55.

Milton, we see, was sensible of the force of such imagery, as we may gather from this short but exquisite passage; and so were Drayton and Spenser. What pictures would a writer of the fancy of Theocritus, have drawn from the scenes and stories of the Isle of Anglesey!

> Yet, still enamour'd of their ancient haunts,
> Unseen of mortal eyes, they hover round
> Their ruïn'd altars; consecrated hills,
> Once girt with spreading oaks; mysterious rows
> Of rude enormous obelisks, that rise
> Orb within orb, stupendous monuments
> Of artless architecture, such as now
> Oft-times amaze the wandering traveller,
> By the pale moon discern'd on Sarum's plain.*

I cannot conclude this article, without inserting two stanzas of an old Runic *ode*† preserved by Olaus Wormius, containing the dying words of Ludbrog, who reigned in the north above eight hundred years ago, and who is supposed to be just expiring by the mortal bite of a serpent.

* See a fine dramatic poem, by Mr. West, entitled, The Institution of the Order of the Garter.

† Cited in Dr. Hickes's valuable Thesaurus.

XXV.

Pugnavimus ensibus. Hoc ridere me facit semper,
Quod Balderi Patris Scamna, parata scio in aula.
Bibemus cerevisiam ex concavis crateribus craniorum.
Non gemit vir fortis contra mortem! Magnifici in Odini domibus,
Non venio desperabundus, verbis ad Odini aulam.

XXIX.

Fert animus finire: Invitant me Dysæ,
Quas ex Odini aula Odinus mihi misit.
Lætus cerevisiam, cum Asis, in summa sede bibam.
Vitæ elapsæ sunt horæ! Ridens moriar!

These stanzas breathe the true spirit of a barbarous old warrior. The abruptness and brevity of the sentences are much in character; as is the noble disdain of life expressed by the two last words, *Ridens moriar*. To this brave and valiant people is mankind indebted for one of the most useful deliverances it ever received; I mean, the destruction of the universal empire of Rome. The great prerogative of Scandinavia, and which ought to place the nations which inhabit it above all the people of the world, is, that this country has been the source of the liberty of Europe;

that is to say, of almost all the liberty that is to be found among men. Jornandes, the Goth, has called the North of Europe the magazine or work-shop of human-kind: I should rather call it the magazine of those instruments which broke in pieces the chains which were forged in the South. There those heroic nations were formed, who issued from their country to destroy the tyrants and slaves of the earth, and to teach men, that Nature having made them equal, Reason could not make them dependent, but only for the sake of their own happiness.*

Liberty and courage are the offspring of the northern, and luxury and learning of the southern, nations.

Oft o'er the trembling nations from afar
Has Scythia breath'd the living cloud of war;
And, where the deluge burst, with sweepy sway,
Their arms, their kings, their gods, were roll'd away.
As oft have issued, host impelling host,
The blue-ey'd myriads from the Baltic coast:
The prostrate South to the destroyer yields
Her boasted titles, and her golden fields:

* See L'Esprit de Loix, liv. XIV. and liv. XVII.

With grim delight the brood of winter view
A brighter day, and heavens of azure hue,
Scent the new fragrance of the breathing rose,
And quaff the pendant vintage as it grows.
GRAY's Works, 4to. p. 196.

10. But in the centre of the hallow'd choir,
Six pompous columns o'er the rest aspire;
Around the shrine itself of FAME they stand,
Hold the chief honours, and the fane command.*

The six persons POPE thought proper to select as worthy to be placed on these pillars as the highest seats of honour, are HOMER, VIRGIL, PINDAR, HORACE, ARISTOTLE, TULLY.† 'It is observable, that our author has omitted the great dramatic poets of Greece. Sophocles and Euripides deserved certainly an honourable niche in the Temple of FAME, as much as Pindar and Horace. But the truth is, it was not fashionable in

* Ver. 178.

† Chaucer has mentioned Statius in this place, in a manner that suits his character:

Upon an iron pillar strong,
That painted was all endilong,
With tyger's blood in every place,
The Tholosan that hight y Stace.

in POPE's time, nor among his acquaintance, attentively to study these poets. By a strange fatality, they have not in this kingdom obtained the rank they deserve amongst classic writers. We have numberless treatises on Horace and Virgil, for instance, who, in their different kinds, do not surpass the authors in question; whilst hardly a critic among us, has professedly pointed out their excellencies. Even real scholars* think it sufficient to be acquainted and touched with the beauties of Homer, Hesiod, and Callimachus, without proceeding to enquire;

> ——What the lofty grave tragedians taught,
> In chorus or iambic, teachers best
> Of moral prudence, with delight receiv'd
> In brief sententious precepts.†

I own, I have some particular reasons for thinking that our author was not very conversant in this sort of composition, having no inclination to

* When this was written, the tragedies of Sophocles, Æschylus, and Euripides, had not been translated: nor had Mr. Mason published his Caractacus, nor Mr. Gray his Runic Odes, when page the 375th was written.

† Paradise Regained, b. IV. ver. 261.

to the drama. In a note on the third book of his Homer, where Helen points out to Priam, the names and characters of the Grecian leaders from the walls of Troy, he observes, that several great poets have been engaged by the beauty of this passage to an imitation of it. But who are the poets he enumerates on this occasion? Only Statius and Tasso; the former of whom, in his seventh book, and the latter, in his third, shews the forces, and the commanders, that invested the cities of Thebes and Jerusalem.* Not a syllable is mentioned of that capital scene in the Phœnissæ of Euripides, from the hundred and twentieth to the two hundredth line, where the old man, standing with Antigone on the walls of Thebes,

* In the dedication to the *Miscellanies* he so much studied and admired, he had read the following strange words of his master Dryden, addressed to Lord Radcliffe: "Though you have read the best authors in their own languages, and perfectly distinguish of their several merits, and, in general, prefer them to the Moderns, yet I know *you judge* FOR *the English tragedies* AGAINST *the Greek and Latin*, as well as against the French, Italian, and Spanish, of these latter ages. Indeed, there is a vast difference betwixt arguing like Perault, in behalf of the French poets against Homer and Virgil, and betwixt giving the English poets their undoubted due of excelling Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles."

Miscell. III. part, Lond. 1693.

Thebes, marks out to her the various figures, habits, armour, and qualifications, of each different warrior, in the most lively and picturesque manner, as they appear in the camp beneath them.*

11. High on the first the mighty Homer shone;
Eternal adamant compos'd his throne;
Father of verse! in holy fillets drest,
His silver beard wav'd gently o'er his breast;
Though blind, a boldness in his looks appears:
In years he seems, but not impair'd by years.†

A striking

* Among the rest, Euripides makes Antigone enquire, which among the warriors is her brother Polynices: this is one of those delicate and tender strokes of nature, for which this feeling tragedian is so justly admired. When she discovers him, she breaks out thus:

Στροφη ί.
Ανεμωκεος ειδε δρομον νεφελας,
Ποσιν εξανυσαιμι δι αιθερος
Προς εμον ὁμογενετερα.
Περι δ' ωλενας δερα φιλτατα
Βαλλοιμι, χρονω φυγαδα μελεον.

She stops a little, gazes earnestly upon him, and exclaims, with admiration at the splendor of his arms,

Ως ὁπλοισι χρυσεοισιν ευπρεπης, γερον,
Εωαις ομοια φλεγεθων
Βολαις ακελιε. Ver. 166.

† Ver. 182.

A striking and venerable portrait! The divine old man is represented here with suitable dignity. In the Anthologia, is a description of a statue of Homer, which, from its antiquity, and the minute enumeration of the features and attitudes of the figure, is curious and entertaining:

——————Πατηρ δ' εμος, ισοθεος φως,
Ιζατο θειος Ομηρος, εϊκτο μεν ανδρι νοησαι
Γηραλεω, το δε γερας εην γλυκυ τετο γαρ αυτῳ
Πλειοτερην εξαξε χαριν· κεκεραζο δε κοσμω
Αιδοιωτε φιλωτε, &c.*

12. The wars of Troy were round the pillar seen:
Here fierce Tydides wounds the Cyprian queen;
Here Hector, glorious from Patroclus' fall,
Here dragg'd in triumph round the Trojan wall;
Motion and life did ev'ry part inspire;
Bold was the work, and prov'd the master's fire.†

The Poems of Homer afford a marvellous variety of subjects proper for history-painting. A very ingenious French nobleman, the Count de Caylus, has lately printed a valuable treatise, entituled,

* Anthолog. ad calcem Callimachi. Edit. Lond. 1741. p. 88.

† Ver. 188.

tituled, " Tableaux tirés de L'Iliade, et de L'Odysse d'Homere;" in which he has exhibited the whole series of events contained in these poems, arranged in their proper order; has designed each piece, and disposed each figure, with much taste and judgment. He seems justly to wonder, that artists have so seldom had recourse to this great storehouse of beautiful and noble images, so proper for the employment of their pencils, and delivered with so much force and distinctness, that the painter has nothing to do, but to substitute his colours for the words of Homer. He complains that a Raphael, and a Julio Romano, should copy the crude and unnatural conceptions of Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Apuleius's Ass; and that some of their sacred subjects were ill chosen. Among the few who borrowed their subjects from Homer, he mentions Bouchardon with the honour he deserves; and relates the following anecdote: " This great artist having lately read Homer in an old and detestable French translation, came one day to me, his eyes sparkling with fire, and said, Since I have read this book, men seem to be

be fifteen feet high, and all nature is enlarged in my sight."*

13. A strong expression most he seem'd t' affect,
And here and there disclos'd a brave neglect.

In the sublime, as in great affluence of fortune, some minute and unimportant articles will unavoidably escape observation. But it is almost impossible for a low and groveling genius to be guilty of error, since he never endangers himself by soaring on high, or aiming at eminence; but still goes on in the same quiet, uniform, secure track, whilst its very height and grandeur exposes the sublime to sudden falls. "Notwithstanding which trivial blemishes, I must ever remain in the opinion, that these greater excellencies, these bolder and nobler flights, though, perhaps, not carried on every where with an equality of perfection, yet merit the prize and preference, by the sole merit of their intrinsic magnificence and grandeur." This just and forcible sentiment of Longinus, in his 33d Section, is a sufficient answer to an outrageous paradox lately

* Pag. 227.

lately advanced by Voltaire, in direct contradiction to his * *former* critical opinions; and which is here set down for the entertainment of the reader: "If we would weigh, without prejudice, the Odyssey of Homer with the Orlando of Ariosto, the Italian must gain the preference in all respects. Both of them are chargeable with the same fault, namely, an intemperance and luxuriance of imagination, and a romantic fondness of the marvellous. But Ariosto has compensated this fault by allegories so true, by touches of satire so delicate, by so profound a knowledge of the human heart, by the graces of the comic, which perpetually succeed the strokes of the terrible, in short, by such innumerable beauties of every kind, that he has found out the secret of making an agreeable monster. Let every reader ask himself what he would think, if he should read, for the first time, the Iliad,

* The word *former* is used, because it is remarkable, that when Voltaire wrote his Essay on the Epic Poets, he not only spoke rather contemptuously of the Italian Poets, but even totally omitted *Ariosto*, for which omission he was immediately attacked by *Rolli*, the Italian translator of Milton; and particularly for saying, that Tasso's chief fault was, having too much of Ariosto in him.

Iliad, and Tasso's poem, without knowing the names of their authors, and the times when their works were composed, and determine of them merely by the degree of pleasure they each of them excited: would he not give the entire preference to Tasso? Would he not find in the Italian more conduct and œconomy, more interesting circumstances, more variety and exactness, more graces and embellishments, and more of that softness which eases, relieves, and adds a lustre to, the sublime? I question whether they will even bear a comparison a few ages hence."*

14. A golden column next in sight appear'd,
On which a shrine of purest gold is rear'd;
Finish'd the whole, and labour'd ev'ry part,
With patient touches of unwearied art:
The Mantuan there in sober triumph sate,
Compos'd his posture, and his look sedate;
On Homer still he fix'd a reverend eye;
Great without pride, in modest majesty.†

II

* Collection complette des Œuvres de M. de Voltaire. Tom. XIII. a Geneve, pag. 46.

† Ver. 196.

Il suo carattere e per tutto grande, e maestoso: e, per poterlo sempre sostenere, si trattiene il poeta, perlo più, sul generale, s'fugendo, a suo potere, tutte le cose minute, e particolari*: alle quali Omero, che a voluto mutar corde, e varior tuono, e liberamente andato all' incontro. E siccome stimeremmo gran sallo biasimare perciò Vergilio, chè á saputo cose bene mantenere il carattere propostosi; così non possiamo non maravigliarci del torto, ch' ad Omero fa Giullo Cesare Scaligero, da cui e riputato basso, e vile, per aver voluto toccare i punti più fini del naturale: quasiche la magnificenza fosse posta solamante nello strepito delle parole——Nell' Egloghe pero si prese la liberta di rappresentar cos-

* Vincenzo Gravina was of Naples, had great learning, and a clear head; was an admirable civilian, as well as critic. He wrote five tragedies on the model of the ancients, with chorusses: Il' Palamede, L'Andromeda, L'Appio Claudio, Il' Papiniano, Il' Servio Tullio. It is said that he missed a cardinal's hat, because of his satirical and severe turn of mind. When he was at Rome, he used to bow to coach horses; "Because, (said he,) was it not for these poor beasts, these great people would have men, and even philosophers, to draw their coaches." Metastasio, poet laureat to the empress queen at Vienna, so famous for operas, was his disciple. Gravina founds his critical opinions on the solid principles of Aristotle; that is, in other words, on nature and good sense.

tumi alle volte troppo civili, ed innalzo sopra la semplicita pastorale lo stile, trattenendosi troppo sul generale: onde quantò nella Georgica si lasciò addietro Esiodo, tanto nell' Egloghe cede a Teocrito, da cui raccolse i fiori: e nel poema eroico, siccome riman vinto da Omero cosi e ad ogn' altro superiore.*

15. Four swans sustain'd a car of silver bright,
With heads advanc'd, and pinions stretch'd for flight:
Here, like some furious prophet, Pindar rode,
And seem'd to labour with th' inspiring God.
Across the harp a careless hand he flings,
And boldly sinks into the sounding strings.†

The character of Pindar, as commonly taken, seems not to be well understood. We hear of nothing but the impetuosity and the sublimity of his manner; whereas he abounds in strokes of domestic tenderness. We are perpetually told of

* Gravina della Ragion poetica. In Napoli 1716. p. 308.

Pope, speaking to Mr. Spence concerning absurd comparisons, mentioned, as such, the comparing Homer with Virgil, Corneille with Racine, the little ivory statue of Polyclete with the Colossus. "These (he added) are magis *pares* quam *similes*."

† Ver. 210.

of the boldness and violence of his transitions; whereas, on a close inspection, they appear easy and natural, are closely connected with, and arise appositely from, his subject. Even his stile has been represented as swelling and bombast; but carefully examined, it will appear far more pure and perspicuous than is generally imagined; not abounding with those harsh metaphors, and that profusion of florid epithets, which some of his imitators affect to use. One of * Pindar's arts, in which they frequently fail who copy him, is the introduction of many moral reflections. Mr. Gray seems thoroughly to have studied this writer. The following beautiful lines are closely translated from the first Pythian Ode. They describe the Power of music:

Oh, sovereign of the willing soul,
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs,
Enchanting shell! the sullen cares,
And frantic passions, hear thy soft controul.

* Cui illud peculiare est (says Bacon finely) animos hominum, inopinatò, sententiolâ aliquâ mirabili, velutî Virgulâ divinâ percutere.

De Augmentis. Scient. Lib. 8.

On Thracia's hills the lord of war
Has curb'd the fury of his car,
And dropp'd his thirsty lance at thy command.
Perching on the sceptred hand
Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feather'd king,
With ruffled plumes, and flagging wing:
Quench'd in dark clouds of slumber lie
The terror of his beak, and lightning of his eye.*

The reader will, doubtless, be pleased to see these striking images copied by another masterly hand:

— — — — With slacken'd wings,
While now the solemn concert breathes around,
Incumbent o'er the sceptre of his lord
Sleeps the stern eagle; by the number'd notes
Possess'd, and satiate with the melting tone;
Sovereign of birds. The furious God of war,
His darts forgetting, and the rapid wheels
That bear him vengeful o'er the embattled plains,
Relents.†———

It is to be observed, that both these imitators have omitted a natural circumstance, very expressive of the strong feeling of the eagle; but

* Dodsley's Collection, vol. VI. p. 322.

† Ibid. vol. VI. p. 13. Hymn to the Naiads, by Dr. Akenside.

but very difficult to be translated with becoming elegance.

— — — Ο δε κνωσσων
Τυγρον νωτον ατειρει, τεταις
Ριπαισι καταστχομενος.*

May I venture to add, that this ode of Mr. Gray ends a little unhappily? That is, with an antithesis unsuited to the dignity of such a composition:

Pindar, Pyth. I. Antistrophe i. v. 5.

This image puts me in mind of a fine stroke in Apollonius Rhodius, who thus describes the effects of Medea's enchantments on the dragon who watch'd the golden fleece:

— — — αυταρ ὅγ ηδη
Οιμη θελγομενῳ, δολιχην αναλυετ' ακαιθαν
Γηγενεῳ σπειρης, δε μυρια κυκλα,

Lib IV. ver. 150.

Few moderns have boldness enough to enter on circumstances so MINUTELY NATURAL, and therefore highly expressive; they are afraid of being thought vulgar and flat. Apollonius has more merit than is usually allowed him, and deserves more consideration among the learned: the whole behaviour and passion of Medea is movingly described. He particularly abounds in such lively and delicate strokes as that quoted above.

Beneath the *Good* how far, but far *above* the *Great.*

It may be also questioned, whether his other ode might not have been better concluded without mentioning the manner in which the bard died. There would have been a beautiful abruptness in finishing with—

> Be thine despair, and sceptred care:
> To triumph and to die are mine

The mind would have been left in a pleasing and artful suspense, at not knowing what became of so favourite a character. Lyric poetry, especially, should not be minutely historical. When Juno had ended her speech in Horace with that spirited stanza,

> Ter si resurgat murus aheneus
> Auctore Phœbo, ter pereat meis
> Excisus Argivis, ter uxor
> Capta, virum, puerosque ploret,

what follows surely weakens the conclusion of this ode, and is comparatively flat:

Non

Non hæc jocosæ conveniunt lyræ:
Quo Musa tendis?*

The inspiration, under which the poet seems to have laboured, suddenly ceases, and he descends into a cold and prosaic apology.†

* Ode III. lib. iii. ver. 69.

† On more closely and attentively considering the subject, I am inclined to alter my opinion concerning the conclusion of this fine Ode of Mr. Gray. The bard not only sustains the part of a prophet, but that of an actor likewise; and is himself most closely related to the subject. For what, in truth, is the subject of this poem: I mean, if we consider it in the view of critical exactness? It is not surely any, or all, of those historical portraits, which are painted in such animated colours through the piece; but simply, the destruction of the Bards of Wales; the rage and fury of the only one that was left alive; his menaces of revenge on the authors of such cruelty; and lastly, to crown all, his own dreadful fate. Imagine, then, that you see this wretched old man, starting up suddenly on the top of a rocky eminence, in full view of the English army; wild with despair, and animated with the thoughts of vengeance; with haggard eyes; his beard loose; and his hoary hair streaming like a meteor in a dark and troubled sky. At sight of the bloody chiefs, he instantly breaks out into abrupt and furious execrations:

Ruin seize thee, ruthless king, &c.

But

16. Here happy Horace tun'd the Ausonian lyre,
To sweeter sounds, and temper'd Pindar's fire:
Pleas'd with Alcæus' manly rage t' infuse
The softer spirit of the Sapphic muse.*

He might have selected ornaments more manly and characteristical of Horace, than

The

But this sudden and most violent burst of anger soon gives place to a softer passion. He laments the untimely deaths of his friends and brethren, in words of the most plaintive tenderness, and most compassionate regret; till, by degrees, he is once more roused to thoughts of vengeance. He imagines that the ghosts of the murdered bards stand present at his call. He weaves, with horrid rites, the destiny of Edward; and denounces misery and affliction on all his race. Again his mind is calmed: he directs his prospect still farther into futurity; and, after soothing his despair, by a survey of happier times, and more merciful princes, throws himself from the rock, with a kind of sullen satisfaction, into the flood below.

This catastrophe must surely be allowed to be well adapted to the subject, the person, and the scene; in a word, to all the horrors with which the poem abounds; and is therefore not only a suitable, but even a necessary catastrophe: necessary to wind up, if I may so speak, the action of the piece.

I said, the horrors of the poem; because the most striking graces in it are certainly of the terrible kind, and for that reason, affect the imagination of the reader more deeply, and more irresistibly.

* Ver. 222.

The Doves, that round the infant poet spread
Myrtles and bays, hung hovering o'er his head.*

Surely his odes afford many more striking subjects for the basso relievos about his statue. In the present ones do we not see a littleness, or rather a prettiness?

Our author alludes to the lyric part of Horace's works. Among the various views in which his numerous commentators have considered his odes, they have neglected to remark the DRAMATIC turn he has given to many of them. Of this sort is the excellent Prophecy of Nereus, where Horace has artfully introduced the principal events and heroes of the Iliad, and speaks in so lively a manner of both, as to make the reader present at every action intended. Of this sort also is the third ode of the third book, in which Juno is introduced, expressing herself with all that fury and indignation against the Trojans which Homer hath ascribed to her. She begins her speech with an angry repetition of, *Ilion, Ilion,*

* Ver. 230.

Ilion, and will not so much as utter the names of Paris and Helen, but contemptuously calls him, the *incestus Judex;* and her, *Mulier peregrina.** The character of this revengeful goddess is all along supported with the same spirit and propriety. Equal commendation is due to the speech of Regulus in the fifth ode, on his preparing to return to Carthage, which ends with an exclamation so suited to the temper of that inflexible hero.

——— O Pudor!
O magna Carthago, probrosis
Altior Italiæ ruinis!

Nor must we forget the natural complaints of Europa, when she has been carried away by the bull, and the shame that arises in her bosom, on her having been seduced from her father, friends, and country.

Impudens liqui patrios Penates!
Impudens Orcum moror! O deorum
Si quis, hæc audis, utinam inter errem
Nuda leones.†

Immediately

* This hath been observed by the old commentator, Acron.

† Ode XXVII. lib. iii.

Immediately another Prosopopœia is introduced. She thinks she hears her angry father rebuking her:

> Vilis Europe (pater urget absens)
> Quid mori cessas? &c.

Of this dramatic species, also, is the conclusion of the eleventh ode of the third book, where one of the daughters of Danaüs, who is not base enough to comply with her father's commands, dismisses her husband with a speech that is much in character. I cannot forbear adding, that of this kind, likewise, is the whole of the fifth Epode, upon which I beg leave to be a little particular, as I do not remember to have seen it considered as it ought to be. It suddenly breaks out with a beautiful and forcible abruptness:

> At O Deorum quisquis in cœlo regis
> Terras et humanum genus,
> Quid iste fert tumultus? aut quid omnium
> Vultus in unum me truces?

It is a boy utters these words, who beholds himself surrounded by an horrible band of witches, with

with Canidia at their head, who instantly seize and strip him, in order to make a love-potion of his body. He proceeds to deprecate their undeserved rage by moving supplications, and such as are adapted to his age and situation:

Per liberos te, si vocata partubus
Lucina veris adfuit;
Per hoc inane purpuræ decus, precor,
Per improbaturum hæc Jovem;
Quid ut noverca, me intueris, aut uti
Petita ferro bellua?

The poet goes on to enumerate, with due solemnity, the ingredients of the charm. Those which * Shakespeare, in his Macbeth, has described, as being thrown into the magical caldron, have a near resemblance with these of Horace;

* It is observable, that Shakespeare, on this great occasion, which involves the fate of a king, multiplies all the circumstances of horror. The babe, whose finger is used in the enchantment, must be strangled in its birth: the grease must not only be human, but must have dropped from a gibbet, the gibbet of a murderer; and even the sow, whose blood is used, must have offended nature by devouring her own farrow.

Johnson's Observations on Macbeth. Act. IV. Scene 1.

race; but he has added others well calculated to impress the deepest terror, from his own imagination. Canidia having placed the victim in a pit where he was gradually to be starved to death, begins to speak in the following awful and striking manner:

— — — O Rebus meis
Non infideles arbitræ,
Nox, & Diana, quæ silentium regis,
Arcana cum fiunt sacra!
Nunc, nunc adeste! nunc in hostiles domos
Iram atque numen vertite, &c.

But she suddenly stops, surprised to see the incantation fail:

Quid accidit?——cur dira barbaræ minus
Venena Medeæ valent?

In a few lines more, she discovers the reason that her charms are inefficacious:

Ah, ah solutus ambulat veneficæ, &c.

She resolves therefore to double them:

* Majus parabo: majus infundam tibi
Fastidienti poculum.

And

* Sanadon has a remark in the true spirit of a fastidious French critic. "These descriptions of witchcraft must have been very pleasing to ancient poets, since they dwell upon them so largely and frequently. But surely such objects have so much horror in them, that they cannot be presented with too much haste and rapidity to the imagination."—Such false delicacy and refinement have rendered some of the French incapable of relishing many of the forcible and masculine images with which the ancients strengthened their compositions. The most natural strokes in a poem that most abounds with them, the Odyssey, is to such judges a fund of ridicule. They must needs nauseate the scenes that lie in Eumeus's cottage, and despise the coarse ideas of so ill-bred a princess as Nausicaa. Much less can such effeminate judges bear the bold and severe strokes, the terrible graces, of our irregular Shakespeare, especially in his scenes of magic and incantations. These *gothic charms* are, in truth, more striking to the imagination than the *classical*. The magicians of Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser, have more powerful spells than those of Apollonius, Seneca, and Lucan. The inchanted forest of Ismeno is more awfully and tremendously poetical, than even the Grove which Cæsar orders to be cut down in Lucan, l. iii. 400, which was so full of terrors, that, at noon day or midnight, the Priest himself dared not approach it,

Dreading the Dæmon of the Grove to meet!

Who, that sees the sable *plumes* waving on the prodigious helmet in the Castle of Otranto, and the gigantic *arm* on the top of

And concludes with this spirited threat:

Priusque cœlum sidet inferius mari
Tellure porrecta super,
Quam non amore sic meo flagres, uti
Bitumen atris ignibus.

The boy, on hearing his fate cruelly determined, no longer endeavours to sue for mercy, but breaks out into those bitter and natural execrations, mixed with a tender mention of his parents, which reach to the end of the Ode. If we consider how naturally the fear of the boy is expressed in the first speech, and how the dreadful character of Canidia is supported in the second, and the various turns of passion with which she is agitated, and if we add to these the concluding imprecations, we must own that this

of *the great staircase,* is not more affected than with the paintings of Ovid and Apuleius? What a group of dreadful images do we meet with in the *Edda!* The Runic poetry abounds in them. Such is Gray's *thrilling* Ode on the Descent of *Odin.* 'Tis remarkable, that the idea of the Fatal Sisters weaving the Danish standard, bears a marvellous resemblance to a passage in Sophocles, Ajax, v. 1053. " Did not Erinnys herself make this sword? and Pluto, that dreadful workman, this belt?

this ode affords a noble specimen of the dramatic powers of Horace.

17. Here in a shrine, that cast a dazzling light,
Sate, fix'd in thought, the mighty Stagyrite;
His sacred head a radiant zodiac crown'd,
And various animals his sides surround;
His piercing eyes, erect, appear to view
Superior worlds, and look all Nature through.*

It may not be unpleasing to observe the artful manner with which Addison has introduced each of his worthies at the Tables of Fame, and how nicely he has adapted the behaviour of each person to his character. Addison had great skill in the use of delicate and oblique allusions.—"It was expected that Plato would have taken a place next his master Socrates; but on a sudden there was heard a great clamour of disputants at the door, who appeared with Aristotle at the head of them. That philosopher, with some rudeness, but great strength of reason, convinced the whole table, that a fifth place at the table was his due, and took it accordingly." Thus in another passage:—"Julius Cæsar was now coming forward;

* Ver 232.

ward; and though most of the historians offered their service to introduce him, he left them at the door, and would have no conductor but himself."*—In the same spirit he tells us, That Q. Curtius intended to conduct Alexander the Great to an apartment appointed for the reception of fabulous heroes; that Virgil hung back at the entrance of the door, and would have excused himself, had not his modesty been overcome by the invitation of all who sate at the table; that Lucan entered at the head of many historians with Pompey, and that seeing Homer and Virgil at the table, was going to sit down himself, had not the latter whispered him, he had forfeited his claim to it, by coming in as one of the historians.

18. With equal rays immortal TULLY shone,
The Roman rostra deck'd the Consul's throne:
Gath'ring his flowing robe, he seem'd to stand,
In act to speak, and graceful stretch'd his hand.†

* Tatler, No. 81, ut sup.

† "After hearing an oration of Tully, "How finely and eloquently has he expressed himself," said the Romans. After Demosthenes had spoke, "Let us rise, and march against Philip," said the Athenians." FENELON.

This beautiful attitude is copied from a statue in that valuable collection, which Lady Pomfret had the goodness and generosity lately to present to the University of Oxford.—Cicero, says Addison, next appeared, and took his place. He had enquired at the door for one Lucceius to introduce him; but not finding him there, he contented himself with the attendance of many other writers, who all, except Sallust, appeared highly pleased with the office.

I cannot forbear taking occasion to mention an ingenious imitation of this paper of Addison, called the Table of Modern Fame, at which the guests are introduced, and ranged with that taste and judgment which is peculiar to the author.* It may not be unentertaining to enumerate the persons in the order he has placed them, by which his sense of their merits will appear. Columbus, Peter the Great, Leo X. Martin Luther, Newton, Descartes, Lewis XIV. William the First Prince of Orange, Edward the Black Prince, Francis I. Charles V. Locke, Galileo, John Faust, Harvey,

* Dr. Akenside. Dodsley's Musæum, No. 13.

Harvey, Machiavel, Tasso, Ariosto, POPE, Boileau, Bacon,* Milton,† Cervantes, Moliere.

19. When on the Goddess first I cast my sight,
Scarce seem'd her stature of a cubit's height;
But swell'd to larger height the more I gaz'd,
Till to the roof her tow'ring front she rais'd.‡

This figure of Fame enlarging and growing every moment, which is copied from Virgil, is imagined with strength and sublimity of fancy.

* "The assembly with one accord invited Bacon forward; the Goddess beckoned him to draw near, and seated him on the highest throne." Musæum, No. 13.

† "I was extremely discontented that no more honourable place had been reserved for Milton. You forget (says my conductor) that the lowest place in this assembly is one of twenty, the most honourable gifts which Fame has to bestow among the whole human species. Milton is now admitted for the first time, and was not but with difficulty admitted at all. But have patience a few years longer; he will be continually ascending in the goddess's favour, and may perhaps at last obtain the highest, or at least the second place in these her solemnities. In the mean time, see how he is received by the man who is best qualified here to judge of his dignity." I looked at him again, and saw Raphael making him the most affectionate congratulations." Musæum, No. 13.

‡ Ver. 258.

Parva metu primo, mox sese attollit in auras,
Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit.*

There is another figure of this sort in the Georgics of Virgil, as nobly conceived. Instead of saying that the pestilence among the cattle encreased daily, what an exalted image has he given us!

Sævit et in lucem Stygiis emissa tenebris
Pallida TYSIPHONE. MORBOS agit ante METUMQUE.
Inque dies avidum surgens caput altius effert.

The sybil in the sixth Æneid is likewise represented as spreading to sight, and growing larger and larger as the inspiration came upon her:

—— Subito non vultus, non color unus,
Non comptæ mansere comæ; sed pectus anhelum,
Et rabie fera corda tument; majorque videri,
Nec mortale sonans.†——

We have still a fourth instance of Virgil's imagination, in the spirited picture he has drawn of the Fury who appears to Turnus in the seventh Æneid.

* Book IV. ver. 176. † Ver. 47.

Æneid.* Turnus, at first, suitably to his character, treats her as an impertinent old priestess, whose habit she had indeed borrowed. Upon which she instantly kindles into rage, assumes her own horrid shape in a moment, the serpents hiss around her head, and her countenance spreads forth in all its terrors:

> At juveni oranti subitus tremor occupat artus;
> Diriguere oculi; tot Erinnys sibilat hydris,
> Tantaque se facies aperit.———

In no part of Virgil's writings is there more true spirit and sublimity, than in this interview between Turnus and the Fury, both whose characters are strongly supported. But to return to FAME. Virgil has represented her as a dreadful and gigantic monster, in which conception, though he might have been assisted by the DISCORD of Homer, yet his figure is admirably designed to impress terror. She has innumerable tongues, mouths, eyes and ears; the sound of her wings is heard at the dead of night, as she flies through the middle of the air:

Nocte

* Ver. 446.

Nocte volat cœli medio, terræque per umbram
Stridens.———

In the day-time she sits watchful on battlements, and on the highest towers, and terrifies great cities, who gaze at her huge and formidable appearance:

Luce sedet custos, aut summi culmine tecti,
Turribus aut altis, et magnas territat urbes.

It did not suit POPE's purpose to represent FAME as so odious a monster. He has therefore dropped these striking circumstances in Virgil, and softened her features;

20. With her the Temple ev'ry moment grew,
And ampler vistas opened to my view:
Upwards the columns shoot, the roofs ascend,
And arches widen, and long iles extend.*

ANON out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave.†

This

* Ver. 262. † Par. Lost, b. i. ver. 710.

This circumstance of the temple's enlarging with the growing figure of the goddess, is lively, and well imagined. The reader feels a pleasure in having his eye carried through a length of building, almost to an immensity. Extension is certainly a cause of the sublime. In this view the following passage of Thomson may be considered, where he speaks of a lazar-house in his Castle of Indolence:*

Through the drear caverns stretching many a mile,
The sick uprear'd their heads, and dropp'd their woes awhile.

21. Next these a youthful train their vows express'd,
With feathers crown'd, and gay embroid'ry dress'd:
Hither (they cry'd) direct your eyes, and see
The men of pleasure, dress, and gallantry:
Ours is the place at banquets, balls, and plays;
Sprightly our nights, polite are all our days:
Of unknown duchesses lewd tales we tell;
Yet, would the world believe us, all were well †

Strokes of pleasantry and humour, and satirical reflections on the foibles of common life, are surely too familiar, and unsuited to so grave and majestic a poem as this hitherto has appeared to be.

* Stanza lxix. c. 2.

† Ver. 378.

be. Such incongruities offend propriety; though I know ingenious persons have endeavoured to excuse them, by saying, that they add a variety of imagery to the piece. This practice is even defended by a passage in Horace:

> Et sermone opus est modo tristi, sæpe jocoso,
> Defendente vicem modo rhetoris atque poetæ,
> Interdum urbani, parcentis viribus, atque
> Extenuantis eas consulto.——

But this judicious remark is, I apprehend, confined to ethic and preceptive kinds of writing, which stand in need of being enlivened with lighter images, and sportive thoughts; and where strictures on common life may more gracefully be inserted. But in the higher kinds of poesy, they appear as unnatural, and out of place, as one of the burlesque scenes of Heemskirk would do in a solemn landscape of Poussin. When I see such a line as

> "And at each blast a lady's honour dies,"——

in the TEMPLE of FAME, I lament as much to find it placed there, as to see shops, and sheds,

and cottages, erected among the ruins of Diocle-sian's Baths.

On the revival of literature, the first writers seemed not to have observed any SELECTION in their thoughts and images. Dante, Petrarch, Boccace, Ariosto, make very sudden transitions from the sublime to the ridiculous. Chaucer, in his Temple of Mars, among many pathetic pictures, has brought in a strange line,

The coke is scalded for all his long ladell.*

No writer has more religiously observed the decorum here recommended than Virgil.

22. This having heard and seen, some pow'r unknown,
Strait chang'd the scene, and snatch'd me from the throne;
Before my view appear'd a structure fair,
Its site uncertain, if in earth or air.†

The scene here changes from the TEMPLE of FAME to that of Rumour. Such a change is not

* Thus again;——"As Æsop's dogs contending for a bone;"——and many others.

† Ver. 417.

methinks judicious, as it destroys the unity of the subject, and distracts the view of the reader; not to mention, that the difference between Rumour and Fame is not sufficiently distinct and perceptible. POPE has, however, the merit of compressing the sense of a great number of Chaucer's lines into a small compass. As Chaucer takes every opportunity of satyrizing the follies of his age, he has in this part introduced many circumstances, which it was prudent in POPE to omit, as they would not have been either relished or understood in the present times.

23. While thus I stood intent to see and hear,
One came, methought, and whisper'd in my ear,
What could thus high thy rash ambition raise?
Art thou, fond youth, a candidate for praise?
'Tis true, (said I,) not void of hopes I came,
For who so fond as youthful bards of Fame?*

This conclusion is not copied from Chaucer, and is judicious. Chaucer has finished his story inartificially, by saying he was surprised at the sight of a man of great authority, and awoke in a fright. The succeeding lines give a pleasing moral

* Ver. 496.

moral to the allegory; and the two last shew the man of honour and virtue, as well as the poet:

> Unblemish'd let me live, or die unknown:
> Oh grant an honest fame, or grant me none!

In finishing this Section, we may observe, that POPE's alterations of Chaucer are introduced with judgment and art; that these alterations are more in number, and more important in conduct, than any Dryden has made of the same author. This piece was communicated to Steele, who entertained a high opinion of its beauties, and who conveyed it to Addison. POPE had ornamented the poem with the machinery of guardian angels, which he afterwards omitted. He speaks of his work with a diffidence uncommon in a young poet, and which does him credit.* "No errors (says he to Steele) are so trivial, but they deserve to be mended. I could point to you several; but it is my business to be informed of those faults I do not know; and as for those I do, not to talk of them, but mend them. I am afraid of nothing so much, as to impose

* Vol. VII. Letters, 8vo. p. 248.

impose any thing upon the world which is unworthy its acceptance."

It would have been matter of curiosity to have known Addison's sentiments of this vision.* His own is introduced and carried on, with that vein of propriety and poetry, for which this species of his writings is so justly celebrated, and which contribute to place him at the head of allegorical writers, scarce excepting Plato himself.

* See Tatler, No. 81, referred to above.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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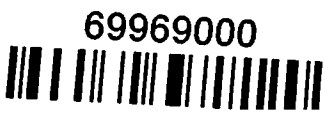

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